Sigiriya Sustainable Destination Management Plan

Sigiriya, the premier tourist attraction in Sri Lanka, receives increasing tourism pressures and environmental concerns which generate imperative to manage Sigiriya as a sustainable destination, balancing preservation efforts for present and future generations.

Sustainable Tourism Unit - Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

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1. **Sigiriya Sustainable Destination Management Plan (DMP)**

1.1 Background:

Sigiriya is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka, known for its historical, cultural, and natural significance. As a premier tourist attraction, it draws visitors from around the world. However, due to increasing tourism pressures and environmental concerns, there is a growing need to manage Sigiriya as a sustainable heritage destination.

1.2. Definition of Terms:

i. **Destination:** A destination refers to a location or place that tourists visit for various purposes, including leisure, cultural exploration, and natural experiences. In the context of Sigiriya, it encompasses the entire area and attractions surrounding the Sigiriya Rock Fortress.

ii. **Sustainable Destination:** A sustainable destination is one that manages its resources, community well-being, and visitor experiences in a way that ensures long-term environmental, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability. This involves minimizing negative impacts on the environment and maximizing positive contributions to the local community and economy.

1.3 Advantages of Sustainable Destination Management Plan for Sigiriya:

i. **Environmental Conservation:** Protecting Sigiriya's natural environment and ecosystems helps preserve its unique flora and fauna for future generations.

ii. **Cultural Preservation:** Maintaining and showcasing Sigiriya's rich historical and cultural heritage ensures that it continues to be a valuable educational and cultural resource.

iii. **Community Benefits:** Engaging and empowering local communities through sustainable tourism practices can improve their quality of life and enhance their participation in tourism-related activities.

iv. **Economic Growth:** A well-managed sustainable destination can stimulate economic growth by attracting responsible tourists and creating opportunities for local businesses.

v. **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** Sustainable practices can lead to a more enjoyable and meaningful experience for tourists, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth.

1.4 Need for a Sustainable Destination Management Plan (DMP):

i. **Environmental Preservation:** With increasing visitor numbers, it's crucial to implement sustainable practices to protect the fragile ecosystem around Sigiriya.

ii. **Heritage Conservation:** Preserving the historical and cultural significance of Sigiriya requires careful planning and management to prevent deterioration.

iii. **Balancing Tourism Growth:** Sustainable tourism planning helps manage the influx of tourists while mitigating negative impacts on the destination and its surroundings.

iv. **Community Involvement:** Engaging local communities in tourism development ensures that they benefit from tourism and actively participate in its success.

v. **Government Commitment:** The Cabinet decision taken develop Sigiriya as the country's first sustainable destination underscores the need for a comprehensive destination management plan.

1.5 Key Components of the Destination Management Plan:

i. **Destination Management Organization (DMO):** Establish a dedicated DMO with the authority and resources to oversee the sustainable development of Sigiriya. This organization should include representation from relevant stakeholders.

ii. **Funding Mechanism:** Secure funding for the DMO through a combination of sources, including government allocations, contributions from tourism businesses, grants, and visitor fees. Ensure a sustainable financial model to support ongoing management efforts.

iii. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve local communities, government agencies, NGOs, tourism businesses, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process to create a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.

iv. **Environmental Conservation:** Develop and implement strategies for conserving Sigiriya's natural environment, including waste management, sustainable transportation, and biodiversity protection.

v. **Cultural Preservation:** Protect and promote Sigiriya's cultural heritage through responsible tourism practices and heritage conservation programs.

vi. **Visitor Management:** Implement visitor management strategies to control visitor numbers, reduce congestion, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

vii. **Education and Awareness:** Educate both visitors and locals about the importance of sustainable tourism and their role in preserving Sigiriya.

viii. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Establish monitoring mechanisms to track the impact of tourism activities and regularly report on progress toward sustainability goals.

ix. **Sustainable Certification & Best Practices:** Sustainable certification continuation for global compliance to sustain the destination with visitor attention, demand and conservation. Adopting the sustainable destination best practices is imperative to sustain the sustainability.

Developing a Sustainable Heritage Destination Management Plan for Sigiriya, based on GSTC criteria and Green Destination certification, will help ensure the long-term sustainability of this iconic destination, balancing the needs of conservation, community well-being, and responsible tourism.

2. Destination Management Plan (DMP)- Sigiriya

2.1 Introduction:

Developing the Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination involves a multifaceted approach that integrates nature and culture conservation, community benefits, service enhancement, visitor infrastructure management, garbage and wastewater management, carrying capacity management, and collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Wildlife and Archaeology Departments. Here is a concept plan that outlines the key elements of this sustainable development project:

2.2 Vision and Mission:

- **Vision:** To create a world-class heritage destination at Sigiriya that conserves its natural and cultural treasures while providing sustainable benefits to local communities and tourism service.

- **Mission:** To achieve a harmonious balance between conservation, community development, and tourism by implementing a sustainable management plan.

2.3 Objectives:

i. Introduce conservation plan to enhance the natural and cultural heritage of Sigiriya and its surrounding sites, including Pidurangala, Mapagala, Ramakele, and Ibbankatuwa. Also consider forestry, wildlife, agricultural, residential and tourism businesses.

ii. Empower local communities through economic opportunities, education, and cultural preservation.

iii. Improve visitor services, tourism business and experiences while minimizing the environmental impact.

iv. Collaborate with relevant authorities, such as the Wildlife, Forestry, Agriculture and Archaeology Departments, CCF, UDA, DS, PS for responsible management.

v. Secure funding through a contributory approach involving public and private sectors.

vi. Reach Sustainable Destination Status as per the Green Destination Criteria.

2.4 Conservation and Restoration:

- Develop a comprehensive conservation plan for Sigiriya and its surrounding sites, focusing on habitat restoration, preservation of historical structures, and responsible tourism practices.

- Implement sustainable land use and waste management practices.

- Establish buffer zones to protect wildlife and cultural heritage.

2.5 Visitor Infrastructure Management:

- Enhance transportation infrastructure and connectivity to make it easier for tourists to access the destination including differently able.

- Implement smart technologies for visitor management (e.g., ticketing, information systems).

- Develop accessible pathways and facilities for differently-abled

2.6 Stakeholder Engagement:

Engage key stakeholders including the Wildlife, Forest and Archaeology Departments, CCF, UDA, PS, DS, MOT, SLTDA local communities, businesses, NGOs, Development funning agencies and tourists to build a collaborative framework for Sigiriya's development.

2.7 Collaboration with Nearby Sites:

- Partner with Pidurangala, Mapagala, Ramakele, Kaludiya Pokuna, Ibbankatuwa, Siriya Lake and other nearby sites for joint marketing and conservation efforts.

- Share best practices for sustainable tourism.

2.8 Garbage and Wastewater Management:

- Install waste bins and recycling stations throughout the site.

- Implement a "pack-in, pack-out" policy for visitors.

- Treat wastewater using eco-friendly methods.

- Educate tourists and local businesses about responsible waste disposal.

2.9 Community Benefits & Empowerment:

- Create community-led enterprises, such as eco-friendly homestays, local artisan markets, and guided tours led by residents.

- Provide education and training to enable sustainable livelihoods and encourage responsible tourism practices among locals.

- Establish revenue-sharing mechanisms to ensure local communities benefit from tourism.
- Foster cultural programs to celebrate and preserve the heritage of the area.

2.10 Visitor Services, Enhancement & Engagement:

- Upgrade visitor facilities, including information centers, restrooms, and viewing platforms.
- Develop eco-friendly transportation options.
- Develop and maintain visitor centers with educational displays and information about the site's history and importance.
- Create well-marked trails and viewpoints to minimize environmental impact.
- Implement a visitor code of conduct, including rules on waste disposal and respectful behavior.
- Implement responsible tourism guidelines and promote eco-conscious behaviors among visitors.
- High-quality facilities and services can attract tourists looking for comfort and convenience, including well-maintained visitor centers and informative guides.
- Introduce interactive exhibits and digital guides for a richer visitor experience.
- Offer interactive experiences like workshops, cultural performances, and hands-on activities to engage visitors and create memorable experiences.

2.11. Carrying Capacity Management:

- Set daily visitor limits based on ecological and cultural impact studies.
- Implement a reservation system for entry.
- Monitor visitor numbers in real-time and adjust entry rates accordingly.

2.12. Value Chain Development:

- Establish partnerships with local businesses and artisans for the supply of goods and services.
- Support local businesses by promoting the sale of local products and services within the destination.
- Encourage the development of sustainable supply chains for restaurants, souvenir shops, and other tourist-related businesses
- Create a certification system for businesses that adhere to sustainability standards.

2.13 Land and Regulatory Issues:

- Collaborate closely with the Wildlife and Archaeology Departments to address land use and regulatory issues.

- Develop a comprehensive land management plan that respects archaeological and ecological sensitivities.

2.14 Funding and Revenue Generation:

- Establish a Sigiriya Conservation Fund through a combination of entrance fees, donations, and contributions from the private sector.

- Seek grants and support from international organizations specializing in heritage conservation and sustainable tourism.

2.15. Marketing, Branding:

- Promote Sigiriya as a sustainable heritage destination through digital marketing, cultural events, and partnerships with travel agencies.

- Showcase success stories and the unique experiences offered by local communities.

2.16. Niche Markets & Online presence:

- Target niche markets such as photography enthusiasts, birdwatchers, or archaeology aficionados by tailoring experiences and packages to their interests.

- Maintain an active online presence through a user-friendly website and social media to attract tech-savvy travelers.

2.17. Sustainable Travelers Preference:

- Appeal to environmentally conscious travelers by promoting sustainable practices, such as responsible waste management and eco-friendly accommodations.

2.18. Legal Framework:

- Ensure that the management plan aligns with local and national laws, regulations, and international conventions related to heritage conservation and sustainable tourism.

2.19. Crisis Management:

- Develop a contingency plan for emergencies, including natural disasters and pandemics, to safeguard both heritage sites and the local community.

2.20. Feedback and Improvement Loop: - Continuously collect feedback from visitors to make improvements and ensure a high level of satisfaction

2.21. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Implement a robust monitoring system to track the progress of the conservation efforts, community development, and visitor satisfaction of DMP.
- Regularly assess the impact of tourism on the environment, culture, and community.
- Adapt the plan as needed based on ongoing evaluation.

2.22. Collaboration and Partnerships: - Partner with travel agencies, tour operators, and international organizations to promote the destination globally.

By implementing this comprehensive management concept plan, Sigiriya can thrive as a sustainable heritage destination while preserving its natural beauty, cultural significance, and benefiting local communities. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders is key to the success of this endeavor.

3. Destination Management Organisation (DMO)- Sigiriya

The Destination Management Organization (DMO) for the "Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination" involves several key functions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to achieve destination certification criteria focusing on nature and culture conservation, community benefits, service enhancement, and maintaining carrying capacity. Additionally, addressing land issues with the Wildlife and Archaeology Departments and securing funding for management are crucial aspects. Here's a breakdown of functions and KPIs for each area:

3.1. Nature and Culture Conservation:

- **Function:** Develop and implement strategies to preserve and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the destination.

- **KPIs:**

  - Percentage increase in the preservation of native flora and fauna.

  - Number of cultural heritage sites preserved/restored.

  - Reduction in environmental impact through sustainable practices.

3.2. Community Benefits:

- **Function:** Engage with local communities to ensure they benefit from tourism while preserving their way of life.

- **KPIs:**

  - Percentage increase in income for local communities through tourism-related activities.

- Number of community-led initiatives supported.
- Level of satisfaction among local communities.

3.3. Service Enhancement:

- **Function:** Improve the overall visitor experience through enhanced services and infrastructure.
- **KPIs:**

  - Visitor satisfaction scores.
  - Percentage increase in repeat visitors.
  - Number of new and improved facilities and services.

3.4. Carrying Capacity Management:

- **Function:** Monitor and manage the number of visitors to ensure the destination's sustainability.
- **KPIs:**

  - Visitor-to-guide ratio.
  - Average length of stay.
  - Monitoring of ecological and cultural impact.

3.5 Value Chain Development:

- **Function:** Develop and support local businesses and suppliers to create a sustainable tourism value chain.
- **KPIs:**

  - Number of local businesses involved in tourism.
  - Increase in revenue generated by local suppliers.
  - Level of local product integration in tourism offerings.

3.6. Land Issues Resolution:

- **Function:** Collaborate with relevant departments to address land issues, especially with the Wildlife and Archaeology Departments.
- **KPIs:**

  - Number of land issues resolved.
  - Percentage of land issues with satisfactory resolutions.
  - Time taken to resolve land issues.

3.7. Contributory Funding for Management:

- **Function:** Secure funding sources for destination management.

- **KPIs:**

  - Amount of funding secured from various sources (government, grants, private sector).

  - Percentage of funding allocated to sustainability initiatives.

  - Financial sustainability of the DMO.

3.8. Nature Arboretum Sites and Village Community Activities:

- **Function:** Promote and manage nature arboretum sites and village community activities.

- **KPIs:**

  - Number of visitors to arboretum sites.

  - Revenue generated from village community activities.

  - Preservation of traditional knowledge and practices.

These functions and KPIs need to be integrated into a comprehensive sustainability and management plan. Regular monitoring, data collection, and stakeholder engagement will be essential to ensure the success of the DMO and the certification of "Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination."

4. Sigiriya Sustainable Destination Management Plan Implementation Committees

Managing the "Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination" involves various committees and functions to address critical aspects of sustainable tourism development. Here are some committees and their functions to manage different aspects of the destination effectively:

4.1 Destination Management Committee:

    a. **Function:** Oversee the overall management of the destination, coordinate between different committees, and ensure alignment with the Sustainable Heritage Destination Management Plan.

4.2 Land Use and Zoning Committee:

    a. **Responsibilities:** Strategic planning, policy development, coordination, and monitoring of the destination's sustainable development.

4.3 Land Use and Zoning Committee:

    b. **Function:** Address land use management and zoning issues within the destination area.

    c. **Responsibilities:** Develop and enforce zoning regulations, land use plans, and land development guidelines to protect natural and cultural resources.

4.4 Carrying Capacity Management Committee:

    d. **Function:** Determine and manage the maximum number of visitors that the destination can sustainably accommodate.

    e. **Responsibilities:** Assess carrying capacity, implement visitor limits, and monitor visitor numbers to prevent over-tourism.

4.5 Waste Management Committee:

    f. **Function:** Develop and implement waste management strategies to minimize environmental impact.

    g. **Responsibilities:** Design waste disposal systems, recycling programs, and litter control measures.

4.6 Infrastructure and Facility Management Committee:

    h. **Function:** Ensure that infrastructure and facilities at the destination are developed and maintained in an environmentally responsible manner.

    i. **Responsibilities:** Infrastructure planning, maintenance, and upgrading to meet sustainable standards.

4.7 Awareness and Monitoring Committee:

j. **Function:** Promote environmental and cultural awareness among visitors and residents.

k. **Responsibilities:** Conduct educational programs, interpretive signage, and visitor information centers. Monitor visitor behavior and compliance with guidelines.

4.8 Safety and Security Committee:

l. **Function:** Ensure the safety and security of visitors and residents within the destination.

m. **Responsibilities:** Develop safety protocols, emergency response plans, and security measures to protect both natural and cultural assets.

4.9 Funds Collection and Management Committee:

n. **Function:** Oversee the collection and management of funds for destination sustainability.

o. **Responsibilities:** Coordinate fundraising efforts, manage the Destination Management Fund (DMF), and allocate funds to various projects and programs.

4.10 Development Monitoring Committee:

p. **Function:** Monitor and assess development projects within the destination area.

q. **Responsibilities:** Review proposed developments for compliance with sustainability criteria, environmental impact assessments, and cultural heritage preservation.

4.11 Destination Criteria aligning Committee:

r. **Function:** Ensure compliance with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) guidelines and measure key performance indicators (KPIs) for Sustainable Destination Status.

s. **Responsibilities:** Monitor and report on progress toward achieving GSTC criteria, establish KPIs, and regularly evaluate the destination's sustainability performance.

These committees are to work collaboratively and in coordination with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, tourism businesses, NGOs, and visitors, to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism development in the Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination. Regular communication, data sharing, and cooperation among these committees are essential for successful destination management.

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5. Destination Management Fund (DMF)- Sigiriya

Generating and managing a Destination Management Fund (DMF) for the "Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination" involves creating a structured financial mechanism that promotes nature and culture conservation, community benefits, and service enhancement. The DMF should collect contributions from various stakeholders, including attraction fees, tourism businesses, CSR initiatives, community associations, NGOs, INGOs, tourism organizations, donors, visitors, business organizations, and volunteer contributions. Here's a step-by-step guide on how to set up and manage the DMF for long-term sustainability and transparency:

5.1 Establish a Governing Body:

- Create a governing body or committee responsible for overseeing the DMF's operations and decision-making. This body should include representatives from government departments, tourism organizations, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders.

5.2 Define the DMF's Objectives:

- Clearly outline the goals and objectives of the DMF, focusing on nature and culture conservation, community development, and service enhancement in the Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination.

5.3 Identify Funding Sources:

- Determine the sources of funds that will contribute to the DMF. These sources can include:

- Attraction Fees: A portion of the fees collected from tourists visiting Sigiriya can be allocated to the DMF.

- Tourism Businesses: Encourage tourism businesses operating in the area to contribute a percentage of their profits to the DMF as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

- Community Associations & NGOs: Seek financial contributions from local community associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the area.

- INGOs and Donors: Attract international NGOs and donors interested in supporting sustainable tourism and conservation efforts in Sigiriya.

- Visitors: Set up voluntary donation points at the destination to collect contributions from tourists.

- Business Organizations: Collaborate with larger business organizations to secure funding for the DMF.

- Government Departments: Allocate a portion of relevant government department funds to the DMF.

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- Volunteer Contributions: Encourage volunteers to contribute their time and expertise to support DMF initiatives.

5.4 Establish Transparent Financial Management:

- Develop a transparent financial management system for the DMF, including budgeting, accounting, and auditing processes. Appoint an independent auditor to ensure transparency and accountability.

5.5 Prioritize Projects and Programs:

- Identify conservation, community development, and service enhancement projects and programs that align with the DMF's objectives. Prioritize these initiatives based on their impact and feasibility.

5.6 Allocate Funds and Monitor Progress:

- Allocate funds to selected projects and programs, and closely monitor their progress and outcomes. Regularly update stakeholders on the status of these initiatives.

5.7 Engage Stakeholders:

- Foster collaboration and engagement among stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, NGOs, and government departments. Encourage their active participation in DMF activities.

5.8 Evaluate Impact and Sustainability:

- Conduct regular evaluations to assess the impact of DMF-funded projects on nature and culture conservation, community well-being, and service enhancement. Adjust strategies and priorities based on these evaluations to ensure long-term sustainability.

5.9 Transparency and Reporting:

- Publish annual reports detailing the DMF's financial performance, project outcomes, and contributions from various stakeholders. Maintain open communication channels with all involved parties.

5.10 Legal Framework:

- Ensure that the DMF operates within the legal framework of the region and complies with all relevant regulations and guidelines.

By following these steps and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, you can establish and manage a Destination Management Fund that contributes to the sustainable development of the Sigiriya Sustainable Heritage Destination while maintaining transparency and accountability.