



TECHNICAL NOTE

THE 14th UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON
TOURISM POLICY AND STRATEGY

***Tourism and Rural Development:
Building Opportunity for Sustainable Growth and Job Creation***

Tuesday 15th to Thursday 17th December, 2020
(online)

Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific

World Tourism Organization

1. Background

Since 2006, the UNWTO has convened the Asia and the Pacific Executive Training Programme on Tourism Policy and Strategy annually. This Executive Training Programme is the only programme of its kind in the region and is renowned for its stimulating content and thought-provoking discussions. The theme and subject of the Programme change each year and has historically had far-reaching impacts both for the host destination and the attendees.

The delegates who attend the Executive Training Programme are high-level officials within their respective governments across Asia and the Pacific region. Through a series of lectures, discussions, debates, and presentations, the Training Programme provides a platform for sharing knowledge and experience, to learn of successful practices in policy and strategy formulation and implementation. The Training Programme gives participants the opportunity to improve their strategic tourism skills and, through a newfound network of regional contacts, continue to develop these skills going forward.

Attending the Executive Training Programme is the opportune chance to learn about the most important issues in the tourism sector and engage with other high-level officials from the Asia-Pacific region. Participants are able to design and formulate policies and programmes in their respective destinations to further stimulate tourism growth and enable the sector to be a viable force for good.

2. Context

These days, rural areas face increasing challenges of depopulation, the decline of traditional economic activities and aging population. Tourism can offer rural communities many opportunities. Tourism can help halt the decline of rural communities, promoting sustainable development including enhanced employment opportunities and economic growth. Especially, there is significant potential for the development of rural tourism in Asia and the Pacific. The diversity of the region's authenticity, tradition, culture, heritage, and nature provides unique visitor experiences. In this respect, tourism and rural development in Asia and the Pacific are timely and important.

There are plenty of reasons to pursue rural development through tourism. First of all, tourism provides commercial and employment opportunities for local communities helping to promote inclusion, fight depopulation and preserve local culture. Moreover, tourism can support the dispersion of demand, benefiting a growing number of regions in a country and promoting a more balanced distribution of tourism throughout the territory.

The public sector has an important role to play in promoting tourism's contribution to rural development in many areas including infrastructure, SMEs development education and training. Yet, the role of the private sector, as a key element of local value chains, is an essential player to ensure the authenticity or sustainability if the experience is to be memorable and recommended. One sector without the other will struggle to advocate sustainable development in rural areas.

One of the key challenges of rural tourism development worldwide relates to product development and commercialization. Rural experience providers often learn how to promote their

products and how to penetrate the sales channels only by intuition and far from reality, which implies that the gap in product development and marketing needs to be tackled with top priority.

On another note, technology and innovation can help drive rural development, by accelerating the access of local providers to global markets, creating new experiences and fostering networks. It is helpful to maximize innovation and technology to tap new markets and diversify products. Technology is enhancing the travel experience by providing customers with access to a wealth of information and knowledge before and during their journey. Big data needs to be considered in rural tourism development given the new wave of digitalization and automation that is rapidly directing towards specialization, customization, and personalization of visitor experiences in rural destinations. The use of big data will help craft marketable experience, monitor impact and boost rural areas by showing travel behaviors and patterns of both domestic and international travelers visiting rural areas.

Also, human capital is of the essence for rural tourism development in order to harness its full potential. Moreover, engaging the private sector to develop tourism strategies for innovation towards growth and development in rural areas has become more essential than ever. The business community has been mentioned in the SDGs as an important collaborator to support national and local government initiatives in destinations.

There will be a Special Session: “Restarting international tourism: successful cases and practices in the era of the New Normal”. This year as the global tourism sector faces up to the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid and sustainable recovery of tourism is essential. It will be informative and helpful to listen to what governments and industry players have done and plan to do to accelerate the recovery process in the tourism industry from China, Greece, Maldives, Portugal, and the Republic of Korea.

3. Training Programme Objective

The overall theme for the 14th UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive online Training Programme is **Tourism and Rural Development**, which is a pressing topic for destinations across the globe.

The programme is specifically designed to support tourism policymakers and managers. It aims at strengthening effective and responsive policies and strategies that in turn must adapt to changing priorities and concerns at national and destination levels.

The overall objectives of the training programme are to deepen participants’ understanding of how tourism can benefit rural areas and result in growth and development, while at the same time creating fair and decent jobs with a focus on the following areas:

- How national tourism authorities can develop policies and strategies to spread and diversify the many benefits tourism can bring to rural destinations;
- How tourism leaders can promote increased growth and development in rural areas in accord with SDGs;
- How an improved governance scheme can push development to rural areas;
- What product development and commercialization challenges need to be prioritized in order to speed tourism development in rural areas;
- How to promote tourism policies and rural development including innovative programs and initiatives;

- How tourism officials can use technology and big data to monitor impacts and promote rural areas;
- How public and private sectors can work together to harness tourism to foster growth, development, and fair and decent job creation particularly for women and young people in rural areas;
- How to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and to drive the recovery
- How public and private sectors can manage destination in the era of the new normal

Moreover, the training program strives to enable UNWTO's Asia and the Pacific Member Countries to share successful tourism good practices on rural development and tourism and the above-mentioned topics. The ultimate aim is to strengthen the capacity of destinations at the regional, sub-regional, national, and destination levels.

4. Executive Training Programme Overview

The 2020 Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme will be held online for the first time.

Five training sessions will start on 15th December 2020. Each session will focus on one of the following topics:

- Governance and Community Engagement for an Enhanced Rural Development (Session 1, Day 1);
- Product Development and Commercialization of Tourism Experiences in Rural Areas (Session 2, Day 1);
- New Opportunity: Innovation and Digital Transformation (Session 3, Day 2);
- Creating Jobs: Education, Skills Development and SME Support (Session 4, Day 2);
- Restarting International Tourism: Successful Cases and Practices in the Era of the New Normal (Special Session, Day 3)

Session 1-4 will have a similar structure, with an opening speech (shorter than 15 minutes), followed by Q&A. After that, country presentations (3 in each session, all shorter than 10 minutes) address specificities and highlight the best practices on each topic. Later, discussions will be held for all delegates so that they can share their country's views and priorities and, eventually, work in drafting some recommendations for policy on each topic.

In the Special Session, the government officials from China, Greece, Maldives, Portugal, and the Republic of Korea will give a speech on "Restarting international tourism: successful cases and practices in the era of the New Normal". The allocated time for each speaker will be about 10 minutes.

A final panel discussion and technical conclusion will serve as a general wrap up of previous Sessions and also an opportunity to figure out how to improve them in the future (Day 3).