

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
STATE OF ERITREA**



**NATIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
FOR ERITREA  
2000-2020**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME  
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION**

**JULY 1999**

## **Part A: NATIONAL PLAN STRATEGIES**

### **1. IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO ERITREA**

Tourism is one of the most dynamic socioeconomic sectors in the world today, and constitutes about 12 per cent of the global economy. International tourism has been growing at about 4-5 per cent annually and this growth rate is projected to continue into the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century until the year 2020. Domestic tourism is also expanding rapidly in many countries.

With its many natural and cultural attractions and a location relatively near major tourist markets in Europe and the Middle East, Eritrea potentially can participate in the growth and benefits of tourism. However, it is essential that tourism be well planned and managed if it is to bring benefits without too many problems.

The concept of sustainable development is now accepted as the fundamental basis for all development planning. The principles of sustainable tourism development are elaborated as follows:

- The natural and cultural resources for tourism are conserved (and often enhanced) for continuous use in the future, while still bringing benefits to the present society.
- Tourism development does not generate serious environmental or socio-cultural problems.
- The overall environmental quality of tourism areas is maintained and improved where needed.
- A high level of tourist satisfaction is maintained so that tourist destinations will retain their marketability.
- The benefits of tourism are widely spread throughout the society.

Sustainable tourism can best be achieved through careful planning, development and management of the tourism sector.

### **2. BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM**

The location of Eritrea and characteristics of the country's nature environment, history and social, cultural and economic patterns strongly influence the development of tourism. The economic development policy adopted by the government in 1998 identifies opportunities and constraints for economic growth. It states that "Eritrea's overall development strategy aims at facilitating the establishment of a dynamic private sector-led market economy." The

policy also indicates that Eritrea has significant potential for developing tourism and efforts are being undertaken to develop this sector.

The opportunities for developing tourism in Eritrea include the major factors of:

- Tourism resources related to the natural environment especially good beaches and marine areas offering water recreation and diving potential, scenic and wildlife areas in several proposed national parks and reserves and some hot springs.
- Tourism resources related to cultural heritage including archaeological and historic sites, rich and varied building architecture in the cities and towns, unusual features such as the scenic historic railway, and cultural patterns of various ethnic groups.
- Relative proximity to major tourist markets in Europe and the Middle East and the important market of Overseas Eritreans.
- Other advantages including an equitable climate in the highlands, some existing development of tourist facilities and services, a safe environment for tourists, and a stable government.

### **3. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY**

#### Tourism Development Policy

- Develop tourism on a sustainable basis.
- Develop international tourism also to introduce the Eritrea's historic and cultural heritage and diverse environments to the international community.
- Develop domestic tourism so Eritrean people have the opportunity to engage in recreation activities and to learn about their environmental, historic and cultural heritage leading to a greater sense of national unity.
- Develop and maintain a good quality level of tourism.
- Develop tourism in a manner that encourages conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and bio-diversity, and conservation of archaeological and historic sites, architecturally important buildings and the cultural traditions and identities of the country's several ethnic groups.
- Create opportunities for spreading the benefits of tourism widely throughout society and the country and specially to local communities. Integrate tourism into the overall national, regional and local development programmes and achieve balanced development.
- Ensure the effective management tourism based on cooperation between the public and private sectors and coordination among the various levels of government.

#### **National Tourism Development Strategy**

The major strategic considerations in developing tourism are that:

- Tourism will be based on a wide range of attractions and activities related to the natural environment and historic and cultural heritage. Several types of tourism can be developed in the country:
  - Beach and marine resort tourism in the coastal and island areas
  - Cultural tourism based on the archaeological/historic sites, architectural heritage and cultural patterns
  - Nature or ecotourism based on national parks and reserves
  - Urban tourism, especially in Asmara, Massawa and Keren
  - Adventure tourism including activities such as trekking in the mountains and deserts and river boating
  - Health tourism focused on the hot springs
  - Agrotourism and rural tourism involving visits to agricultural enterprises and villages
  - Business and conference tourism based on business travel and developing meeting and conference facilities
  - Cruise tourism including visits by private yachts, local Red Sea ship cruises and larger ships.
  
- Both general interest sightseeing tours and tours related to special interest themes can be developed. The types of tourism products and tourists markets can support both types of tourism.
- Eritrea can be promoted both as a single destination and be included on multi-country tours of the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula. The tourist attractions in Eritrea are important enough to attract tourists to the country but also are complementary to attractions in nearby countries.
- For domestic tourism, in addition to the types of tourism indicated above, facilities and services will be developed for Eritreans to enjoy. There will be development of recreation facilities near urban areas, organization of youth, student and workers' tours, and domestic-oriented health spa development.
- Tourism planning and development will geographically be based on the existing administrative regions of the country. The administrative regions provide the basis for development implementation and management.

The national strategy specifies international, regional and national tour circuits.

These circuits include both important historic routes and general sightseeing and special interest routes. The international historic routes identified are:

- Holy Grail or Ark of Covenant Trail on which the Ark of the Covenant was allegedly brought from the Middle East into Eritrea
- Queen of Sheba Triangle involving the stopover of the Queen of Sheba stopping over in Eritrea and supposedly giving birth to the son of Solomon here
- Route of Shebaba on which some disciples of Mohammed travelled from Mecca to Massawa and inland Eritrea.

The national strategy identifies tourism development corridors which are the immediate visual and physical environment of major tour routes. The four principal corridors are:

- Asmara to Massawa
- Asmara to Keren
- Asmara to Zalambesa
- Asmara to Tera-Emni

Development within the corridors will be controlled so that they are attractive, driving and parking areas are relatively safe, there is provision of suitable tourist facilities and scenic viewpoints and landscaping developed or enhanced. The historic railway will be an important attraction in the Asmara to Massawa and eventually the Asmara to Keren corridors.

### **Regional Tourism Development Strategies**

Development strategies are set forth for each of the six regions of the country as follows

**CENTRAL REGION:** This region is the main gateway to the country and an important business and administrative centre. The focus is on urban tourism development.

Within the region outside of Asmara city the main improvements are:

- 'Roof of Africa' Hotel, Conference Centre and Golf Course located east of Asmara and the Mai Chihot reservoir. This will be the main conference facility in the country. Other recreation facilities can be developed including swimming pools, tennis courts and an equestrian centre.
- Expansion of the National Zoo and development of a Botanic Garden and Ethnographic Museum located east of Asmara where the Zoo is now situated. A view hotels may be appropriate in this area eventually.
- Removal of the solid waste disposal site on the Massawa Road and development of a good quality restaurant and view point on the site, with a proper sanitary landfill dump relocated elsewhere.
- Hiking lodge, restaurant and viewpoint on the Massawa Road and development of rural tourism in Durfo Valley.
- Visitor reception centre and guide services at Himbirti Cave which contains prehistoric cave etchings.
- Limited recreation facilities such as picnicking areas and hiking trails at several of the lakes in the region but not including water recreation because these are water supply sources for Asmara.

Within Asmara city, several improvements are specified:

- Re-establishment of the national museum, which will be an important focus for cultural tourism in the country.
- Industrial museum developed at the present Africa Match and Paper Factory

- Struggle for Independence Museum, possible in the existing prison complex
- Railway museum at the existing railway station
- Asmara city museum which will include exhibits on the architectural heritage of the city
- Historic building and district preservation including buildings of the Florentine, Art Deco, Italian Colonial, Coptic and other historic styles, with restoration of specific important buildings such as the Asmara Theatre.
- Upgrading of the city centre including: pedestrianisation of Independence avenue and streets extending to the Kulafah Al Rashidin Mosque and Kiddisti Mariam Coptic church, and upgrading of the squares in front of the mosque and church, and the market area.
- Improvement of 1<sup>st</sup> September Square according to and integrated master plan.
- Improvements to Jubilee Avenue and fountain and the city parks; development of the original scheme for Piazza Roma; park development of Piazza San Michael; upgrading of Asmara Stadium; application of visitor management schemes for the religious buildings, rehabilitation of existing hotels and development of new hotels including a high quality hotel on the printing press site on Independence Avenue; and other improvements.
- Dedication of Piazza Roma, Piazza San Michael or other suitable park area to the Russian poet, Pushkin, whose ancestor Ibrahim Hannibal came from Eritrea.
- Organization of city tours including walking tours and road tours of the attractions in the region.

The tourism-related improvements should be incorporated into the city master plan that is expected to be prepared in the near future.

**ANSEBA REGION:** This is a complementary urban tourism destination for day tours from Asmara as well as overnight stays, with Keren also serving as a base for touring other attractions in the region and places further north. The equable climate of this region can attract residents of Asmara and Massawa for weekend trips.

Improvements in the region include:

- Agrotourism resort at the large Elabered Farm which will include a variety of recreation facilities and tours of the farming activities
- Halhal Plateau National Park with conservation of the area and development of hiking, riding and camping facilities
- Archaeological site at Orota with conservation of the site and development of a visitor information centre
- St. Mariam Da'ari Shrine with development of visitor facilities

Improvement in Keren town include:

- regional museum developed in the historic building presently occupied by the regional Administration.
- Railway (bus) station and square with restoration of the station building and landscaping of the square.
- Upgrading of the market area including tile roofing of the buildings and surfacing of the streets and walkways with cobblestones.

- Fort Park developed at the hilltop for site when it released from military use.
- Italian and British cemeteries to continue being well maintained.
- Historic building preservation of architecturally interesting buildings.
- Faraj Adem Monument to be restored at its original site on Battaria Hill.
- Hotel development including a new high quality hotel in the open area in front of the railway station, conversion of the former Deputy Governor's house into an economy hotel, conversion of the government guest house on the slope of Fort Hill into a good quality hotel, renovation of the Keren Hotel and other existing hotels.
- Other improvements to the townscape including landscaping and development of more outdoor cafés.
- Organisation of regional road tours and town walking tours.

The tourism-related improvements to Keren town should be incorporated into the town master plan that is currently being prepared.

**NORTHERN RED SEA REGION:** This region contains a diversity of attractions. The focus of the region is Massawa which offers urban tourism and is the gateway to beach and marine resorts on the coast and islands and some important archaeological sites, as well as Struggle for Independence sites in the north and spa resorts inland.

Improvements in the region include:

- Island resorts especially on Dissei Island and Dahlak Kebir, based on beach recreation and water sports including diving
- Coastal beach resorts with the largest at Gurgusum (to be developed in the immediate future) and other resorts at Ras Artau on Buri Peninsula, and Mersa Gulbub, Mersa Ibramin and Ras Kubaa on the north coast (for longer term development)
- Necropolis, an early Islamic cemetery and nearby ancient cisterns on Dahlak Kebir, to be further researched and developed with a visitor centre, trails and guide services.
- Adulis, the seaport of the Adulite civilization, to be excavated with some buildings reconstructed and development of a visitor centre and other interpretive facilities.
- Semenawi National Park which encompasses the escarpment north Asmara and offers some spectacular scenery and forests, to be conserved and developed with visitor facilities including hiking trails and camping facilities.
- Buri Peninsula Protected Area to be conserved and developed with visitor facilities including hiking trails, camping areas and wildlife viewing sites.
- Debre Bizen Monastery to be maintained and developed with a visitor reception centre and improvement of the trail to the monastery (but not allowing vehicular access).
- Danakil Depression, of which a portion is in this region, to be conserved an trekking excursions organized including use of traditional nomadic style accommodation.
- Struggle for Independence sites at Nakfa including the Globe and Denden Trenches and underground command posts and also sites at Aroto/Himbol, which will be conserved and developed with visitor interpretive facilities.
- Ottoman Turkish Mausoleum at Kubkub which will be maintained and developed with visitor facilities.

- Roras Plateau Protected Area which will be conserved and developed with hiking and riding trails and camping facilities.
- Hot springs spa resorts at Akwaar (international standard) and Mai Wui (domestic standard).

Massawa city improvements include:

- Conservation and revitalization of the historic urban core on Massawa Island, with its many buildings of Turkish, Egyptian and Italian Moorish architectural styles, with development of more tourist facilities but retaining its residential/commercial character
- Eventual relocation of the port across the bay to the peninsula of Sheik Abdel Kader and Bay of Gherar area with the existing dock facilities used for cruise ships. A port development plan will be prepared soon.
- Marina and island ferry port on the Southwest corner of Massawa Island. Material excavated for the marina can be used for landfill of the adjacent area to provide for urban expansion including good quality villas and flats.
- Expansion of Taulud (Tiwalot) Island on the east side to be used for recreation, tourism and residential uses including a pedestrian promenade.
- Restoration of Serraglio Palace and its development as the regional museum and a park.
- Hotel development includes opening of the already renovated Red Sea Hotel, expansion and upgrading of the Dahlak Hotel, conversion of the Melotti Residence as a high quality hotel, consideration of conversion of some of the historic buildings in Massawa Island into historic hotels, upgrading and development of other hotels as needed in the area.
- Sheik Saeed Island to be designated as an ecological reserve including the extensive mangrove area and developed with walking trails and interpretive signs. Access to the island is to be by boat only.
- Cruise tourism based on yacht stopovers, small ship cruises in the Eritrean waters and islands and larger ship cruises of the Red Sea and beyond.
- Tour circuits include:
  - Day tours from Massawa to Adulis, Buri Peninsula, Semenawi and other places
  - Safaris to the Danaki Depression and along the northern coast focused on Rashaida Bedouin cultural patterns and linked up with Tigre Sahel groups and salt trading trails
  - Two-day horse or camel safari on the historical British Campaign (1868) route, from Dolphin Bay at the southern end of the Gulf of Zula up the mountain valley, past Mount Soira to QoHaito
  - Road tours can be made to the Struggle for Independence military sites at Nakfa and Orota/Himbol and the Roras Plateau protected area, when the new road is developed along the base of the highlands
  - Boat tours to the Dahlak Islands including visiting the Necropolis
  - Walking tours of the historic area of Massawa Island

The town plan for Massawa is rather outdated and should be revised with the revision incorporating the improvements for tourism.

**SOUTHERN RED SEA REGION:** This region incorporates the southern coastal area of the country and is focused on the port city of Assab. Business travel will be important to Assab and there is potential for beach and marine tourism based on the Eritrean and regional markets. The coastal road is at present in very poor condition and access is primarily by air. However, the coast road is proposed for improvement in the near future.

Region tourism development includes:

- Adventure safaris focused on the Danakil Depression and places further south and Rashaida groups' cultural patterns.
- Beach resort development at Beilul and Beri'isole when access is improved to these places. The potential for developing game fishing will be investigated along this area of the Red Sea.
- Roadside facilities including small lodges along the coast road, possibly at Tio and Idi.
- Upgrading of existing hotels and eventual development of new hotels and other tourist facilities in Assab primarily to serve business travellers.
- Resort facilities for the Assab Bay islands focused on family-oriented recreation based on water sports themes.

**SOUTHERN REGION:** Tourism in this region is focused on Adulite archaeological sites complemented by scenic rugged mountain and agricultural landscape and some other attractions. The area is a destination in its own right but eventually can also be part of cross-border tours that include archaeological sites in northern Ethiopia.

Tourism development projects include:

- Big Trees in the Saganetti area which are physically impressive and serve as meeting places for local people. The trees are protected by local residents. Tourist stopover facilities are required.
- A country recreation resort at Mai Aini farm as a form of rural tourism. This place is also associated with the important battle of Tsorena.
- Tokonda Adulite site which requires further excavation, research and conservation. Depending on the importance of the site, visitor facilities will be developed.
- Kaskase Adulite site which requires further excavation, research and conservation. Depending on the importance of the site, visitor facilities will be developed.
- QoHaito Adulite site, one of the major archaeological sites in Eritrea, requires further excavation, conservation and some reconstruction of structures, and integrated visitor facilities developed. Prehistoric cave paintings are also located here, and scenic views are outstanding.
- Metera Adulite site, also one of the major archaeological sites in Eritrea, requires further excavation, conservation and some reconstruction of structures, and integrated visitor facilities developed. Associated with this site is the old village of Metera.
- Historic churches in the Metera/Senafe area include the Adulite style church in Metera, the ancient church of Baraknaha built in a cave alongside a river and the church of

Mastel situated on a high cliff face. These will be preserved and have visitor interpretive facilities.

- Debra Libanos Monastery, and associated nearby graves of naturally mummified bodies, is considered one of the oldest monasteries in Eritrea. Improved access from Eritrea and visitor facilities will be developed.
- Hotel development includes many existing small hotels, some of which can be upgraded, and new good quality hotel development, especially at the QoHaito and Metera sites.

Tour circuits will be based on visits to the archaeological sites and other attractions in Eritrea and some tours can be extended to include archaeological sites across the border in Ethiopia.

**GASH-BARKA REGION:** Comprised mostly of the western lowlands, this region will be developed for low-volume nature and adventure tourism. It can appeal particularly to the domestic youth market and ecotourists. Tourism-related projects include:

- Gash Setit Protected Area to be conserved and developed with visitor facilities of a visitor information centre, accommodation, camping, hiking trails and game viewing sites.
- White-water boating to be organized on the Setit River
- Halhal-Agordat hiking trail from Halhal Plateau Protected Area to Agordat with camps developed along the trail, developed especially to encourage youth organizations to establish outward bound, summer school and international exchange programmes
- Road safaris to visit the archaeological sites at Mount Elit and Aabu, and roadside facilities developed in these areas and at Agordat and Barentu.
- Development of the Mount Elit-Kunama Cultural Centre focused on the cultural patterns of local ethnic groups.

#### **4. IMPROVING TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

Improvements to specific attractions were identified in the regional development strategies. Overall approaches to investigating and improving attractions are examined here, as follows:

- The Eritrean area of the Red Sea including the offshore islands overall offers good potential for water recreation and sports including beach recreation and swimming, snorkelling and scuba diving, sail and motor boating, wind surfing, water and jet skiing and sport fishing (likely but requires further investigation). For diving, interesting sunken ships can be seen in the harbour at Dahlak Kebir as well as the marine life. Present research being conducted by the Ministry of Fisheries on the location of good diving sites will be continued.
- Conservation of the beach and marine environment is essential both for tourism and scientific reasons. The island marine area will be designated as a marine park or reserve, and conservation controls established on use of the marine environment.
- Certain land areas possess considerable conservation value for preservation of wildlife, plants and scenic landscapes. A system of protected areas has been proposed and will be organized into national parks, strict nature reserves and biodiversity conservation areas.

After adoption of legislation designating the protected areas, management plans including visitor facilities will be prepared for each area.

- Even with application of conservation programmes, it is estimated that 10-15 years will be required for wildlife populations to increase sufficiently to attract many tourists. However, the variety of bird species and their populations are sufficient to attract bird watching groups at the present time.
- Hot springs are considered suitable for spa resort development at Akwaar and Mai Wui. Other hot springs require further investigation to determine whether they are adequate for spa development.
- Six sites – Adulis, Metera, QoHaito, Necropolis, Struggle for Independence sites at Nakfa and the Big Trees at Saganetti – have been proposed by UNESCO for designation as World Heritage Sites and this designation should be obtained in the near future.
- Archaeological, historic and other cultural heritage sites will be given thorough and imaginative interpretation so that they can be more interesting to tourists. Interpretive techniques include guide services, information brochures, information signs, audio self-guided tours, audio-visual presentations, sound and light shows, interactive exhibits, reenactment of historic events, etc.
- Eritrea has a rich architectural heritage of much interest to both residents and tourists. Further research is required on the various architectural styles, historic preservation plans prepared, legislation adopted, and preservation measures applied. Architecturally important buildings should be specifically restored and measures adopted to encourage restoration of other architecturally interesting buildings. New development in architecturally interesting urban districts should be of a compatible style and scale.
- Traditional cultural patterns of the various ethnic groups in Eritrea are of much interest to cultural tourists, and village tourism programmes will be organised. These can include day tours to visit villages and overnight stays in villages in village owned and operated accommodation. Village tourism programmes should be organized to maximise benefits accruing directly to the villages.
- Crafts and speciality goods shopping is an important attraction for tourists and means of income for residents and should be further improved and promoted. Crafts are already well developed in Eritrea and can be further improved with items offering more appeal to tourists. Legislation will be adopted on crafts, differentiating authentic Eritrean crafts from imported crafts, and requiring labelling of Eritrean items. Speciality goods such as sweaters, shoes and jewellery are an important attraction for tourists and can be further developed.
- Traditional Eritrean cuisine (national food) is distinctive and tasty and should be further promoted to tourists. Many tourists like to try local cuisine and should be encouraged to do so. National food is already available in several tourist restaurants.
- Museums are very important for cultural tourism, but Eritrea is greatly deficient in museums and their development will be emphasized. The several museums proposed in the regional development strategies should be implemented in the near future. Especially important is re-establishment of the national museum.
- The Eritrean National Festival, known as the Expo Festival, could be further developed and promoted to tourists. This festival already exists but requires further development and international promotion.

## **5. DEVELOPING TOURIST MARKETS**

The major points on developing tourist markets are as follows:

- Tourist arrivals to Eritrea increased substantially from 1992 to 1997. However, because of the border conflict, arrivals sharply decreased in 1998 and probably will remain depressed in 1999.
- Potential tourist markets are:
  - Europe, especially Italy, Germany, UK and France
  - North America, especially the USA
  - Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia
  - Regional African, especially the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia
  - Eritreans living abroad, which is currently and will continue to be a very important market
  - Asia which, except for some business travel, is a longer-term market opportunity.
- Types of tourist markets to be developed are:
  - Beach resort
  - General sightseeing
  - Scuba diving and snorkelling
  - Special interest and adventure
  - Spa
  - Meeting and conference
- There are major competing destinations to Eritrea including in the northern Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, Southeast Asia, other African countries and, for spa tourism, the east and west sides of the Dead Sea, but Eritrea offers advantages that can make it competitive with these other destinations.
- Market targets have been established, based on the number of tourists that can be attracted if the plan recommendations are followed. Reaching these targets assume the current border conflict will soon be resolved. These targets are:
  - For international tourism, for the year 2020, a high of one million tourist arrivals, a low of 600,000 arrivals and a mid-range level of 800,000 arrivals.
  - For domestic tourism, 1.5 million tourists trips by 2020.
- Marketing objectives are determined, a marketing strategy is set forth and a promotion programme specified. The key challenge is establishing a clear-cut image of Eritrea internationally as a destination that offers new and interesting experiences, a variety of active and passive tourist pursuits and the opportunity to relax in a comfortable climate.

## **6. IMPROVING TOURISM FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Various types of tourist facilities and services require improvement and expansion:

- There are about 4,000 accommodation rooms currently existing, many of which do not meet minimum standards and will need to be upgraded or phased out.
- Based on the market targets, additional accommodation rooms needed by 2020 will be 9,000 units at the high level, 7,000 at the medium level and 5,000 at the low level. New accommodation will be developed in all the regions but major development will take place in the coastal and island beach and diving resort areas.
- Many restaurants, cafés and bars currently exist but more will be needed as tourism expands. Sanitation in some of these enterprises has yet to meet the minimum standards.
- There are 29 licensed travel agents currently existing and more agencies can be developed as needed. Particularly required is more training of agency staff. Licensing of tour guides will be undertaken in the near future.
- Tourist information services require improvements with establishment of a new main information office in Asmara and improved regional information offices in Massawa and Keren. Eventually, information offices will be developed in the other regions. The information office in the airport is well located and only requires minor improvements.
- For persons from most of the major tourist market countries, visas should be issued on arrival. At present, visas are required before arrival in Eritrea and this is a deterrent to tourism growth.
- Shopping for crafts and speciality items is generally satisfactory and will expand as tourism grows. Duty free shopping at the airport only requires some increased variety in the goods on sale.
- There are no extraordinary health threats to tourists in Eritrea, but they must take reasonable precautions. Medical facilities and services are available but cannot handle all major problems. Special arrangements are required to handle medical emergencies in remote areas.
- Meeting and conference facilities are currently limited to meeting rooms in hotels. However, the new International Asmara Hotel Offers conference facilities and a new conference centre is shown on the Central Region development strategy to be located near Asmara.
- Other tourist facilities and services are satisfactory except there is need for wider acceptance of credit cards.
- Public safety is not a problem in the country.

## 7. IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TOURISM

The infrastructure of Eritrea was greatly affected during the Struggle for Independence through destruction and damage, inadequate or non-existent maintenance and lack of investment. The Government is undertaking major infrastructure rehabilitation and development programmes.

For tourism development, infrastructure improvements are:

- **Airports and air services:** With the improvements completed or underway, the Asmara international airport facilities are adequate but more frequent and more direct flights from the major market countries are required. An international airport is under construction at Massawa which will serve the beach/marine resort traffic. The

international airport at Assab requires major improvements. The regional airports in the country all need improvements, with the airport at Nakfa especially important to serve the historic military sites.

- **Roads:** A major road improvement programme for the country is underway. Currently, the roads important for tourism – between Asmara and Massawa, Keren and south to Zalambesa are all improved and adequate for tourist travel. Most other roads serving tourists sites are in poor condition and in the process of being improved. Improvements of the north and south coastal roads are important to open up tourism sites in those areas, as are the roads leading to the southwestern areas.
- **Railway:** The railway, especially the section over the escarpment between Asmara and Massawa, offers a highly scenic and interesting travel experience for tourists, and the section between Asmara and Keren is also scenic. Dismantled during the Struggle for Independence, the railway is undergoing rehabilitation with the section between Massawa and Ghinda completed and the Ghinda-Asmara section under way. The railway rehabilitation programme will be continued and, when more complete, rail excursions will be promoted to tourists.
- **Water supply:** Central water supply systems are limited to the cities and main towns. With the improvements currently underway, the water system for Asmara will be sufficient to serve tourism development in the city. Plans are being prepared to improve and expand the water system in Massawa including serving the Gurgusum resort. In Keren, a new water source is being sought for the existing system. Several smaller towns have central water supply and distribution systems. Resort development on the islands will require installation of desalination plants.
- **Electric power:** Currently, each city and several towns have their own power generation plants. A large generation plant is under construction near Massawa which will initially produce 80 megawatts, and the power grid is being extended from the plant to large areas of the country including Asmara and Keren. Therefore, there should be no power problem in the main tourism areas. In remote areas, electric power is supplied by local generation plants. For island and remote coastal resorts, power generation will need to be provided on site by the resort developers. Because of its large amount of sunshine, Eritrea should take advantage of solar power generation.
- **Telecommunications:** A major rehabilitation programme has recently been carried out on the telecommunication system of the country, with new micro-wave links from Asmara to Keren and Massawa installed. The present international satellite system is to be replaced by a purpose-built standard earth station. Digital local and international direct dialling is now available in most areas. With these recent improvements in the system, it is not expected that telecommunications will present any serious problems in developing tourism.
- **Waste management:** Sewage and solid waste collection, treatment and disposal are not yet well developed in Eritrea. No regulations or standard practices apply to waste management in the country, and no single agency has statutory responsibility for waste management which is the responsibility of the municipal or district authorities. Asmara has a combined water drainage and sewage system that has some defects. Development outside the city can presumably connect to septic tanks or utilize package sewage treatment plants. Massawa utilizes septic tanks, as does most development in Keren. Asmara requires relocation of its solid waste disposal site, while the disposal sites in Massawa and Keren can be used for several years. Coastal and island resorts will need to

utilize septic tanks or package sewage treatment plants. Solid waste produced by resorts on the smaller islands will need to barge their solid waste to the Massawa dump site. The government should adopt a policy and establish standards on waste management.

## **8. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM**

Tourism generates several types of economic benefits to Eritrea and its regions and local communities:

- **Tourism receipts and gross foreign exchange earnings:** Tourism receipts can be estimated from the average daily expenditures of tourists (based on tourists surveys). For international tourism, tourists receipts comprise the gross foreign exchange earnings from tourism. Gross foreign exchange earnings are important to Eritrea but because of lack of specific data are difficult to quantify.
- **Net foreign exchange earnings:** Net foreign exchange earnings are determined by deducting the value of imported goods and services used in tourism (the import content of tourism) and other foreign exchange leakages associated with tourism from the gross foreign exchange earnings. The foreign exchange leakage factor is estimated to be rather low in Eritrea at present but will probably increase as higher quality facilities are developed.
- **Employment:** Employment in tourism is comprised of the direct jobs in hotels, tourist restaurants, tour and travel services and retail shops catering to tourists, and the indirect employment generated in the supplying sectors of tourism such as agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and craft production. There is also induced employment generated from the local spending by employees in tourism. In Eritrea, direct employment is estimated to be about 5,700 in 1999 (including all restaurants), indirect employment is estimated to be a factor of 2.0 of direct jobs, and induced employment a factor of .5, for a total almost 20,000 jobs generated by the tourism sector.
- **Contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The net income produced by tourism can be calculated as a percentage of the GDP of the country. In countries where tourism is a well developed sector, it contributes from 5 to 10 per cent or more of the GDP.
- **Government revenues:** An important benefit of tourism is the generation of government revenues. These revenues are derived from the hotel and restaurant expenditure taxes, custom duties, income taxes and other sources.
- **Multiplier effect:** The multiplier effect is the effect on the economy of the re-spending by residents within the economy of the tourist expenditures. This re-spending of tourism expenditures generates income and employment. The more integrated the economy, in which there is considerable local purchases of goods and services for tourism, the higher is the multiplier effect. Greater leakages of tourism expenditures to pay for imported goods and services reduces the multiplier effect. For Eritrea, the multiplier effect is estimated to be about 1.5 based on actual multiplier factors in similar economies.
- **Tourism as an economic catalyst:** Tourism in Eritrea can be an important catalyst to other economic sectors by providing a market for locally produced goods and services. The greatest impact is likely to be on agriculture and fisheries because of the large amount of food items used in tourism. Also, manufacturing and crafts production can be stimulated by tourism. In addition, development of tourist facilities helps support the

local construction industry. In Eritrea, for example, considerable amounts of locally produced food items are used in tourism.

- Development of infrastructure: Tourism requires adequate infrastructure development to function efficiently, and tourism can help justify and pay for infrastructure that benefits the entire society.
- Development of entrepreneurial, managerial and other skills: Tourism can help develop entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities, through the establishment and management of tourism enterprises. Other transferable skills include language capabilities and social skills. These skills are especially needed in Eritrea.

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When tourism returns to its normal pattern of growth and more economic data are available in Eritrea, more specific analysis of the economic impact can be made as well as projections of economic benefits.

There are various ways in which economic benefits can be enhanced in Eritrea, including:

- Establish stronger linkages between tourism and other economic sectors. Tourism and production of food items are already strongly linked, but quality controls on local food production will be improved in order to meet future demand for higher quality products.
- Train and employ Eritreans. Most employees in tourism are already Eritrean. In order to maintain quality levels in some new facilities, it will be necessary to employ some foreigners. However, Eritreans will be trained to eventually take over these positions.
- Encourage locally owned and managed small and medium size tourism enterprises (SMEs): Techniques for encouraging more tourism SMEs are set forth in tourism plan and the Ministry of Tourism has established a small tourism enterprises unit.
- Spread tourism development more widely throughout the country and society. Economic benefits are also measured with respect to how many communities and people are receiving benefits. The tourism development strategy of Eritrea shows tourism developed in all regions, but this will take some time to accomplish because of the remoteness of some areas.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TOURISM**

Management of the natural resources for tourism is essential. The natural land and marine environment of Eritrea provides major types of tourist attractions, and the success of beach and marine resorts and nature-based tourism depends on protecting the natural environment. The *National Environmental Management Plan for Eritrea (NEMP-E)* identifies the major environmental and development issues of the country, and sets forth the environmental management plan and how to implement it. Two of the key approaches are designation and management of protected areas and integrated coastal zone management.

Managing the environmental impacts of tourism is also crucial in order to protect tourism areas. Some impacts of tourism are positive, especially to help justify and pay for conservation of important natural areas and wildlife because these are attractions for tourists. Several types of negative environment impacts can result from tourism development if it is not well planned, developed and managed.

Environmental protection measures that are integrated into the tourism planning, development and management process are to:

- Not overdevelop or overuse tourism sites, that is, not exceed their carrying capacities.
- Use well designed infrastructure systems, especially providing adequate waste management techniques, in tourism areas.
- Develop adequate road and other transportation systems.
- Apply environmentally suitable land use and site planning principles, development standards and architectural, landscaping and engineering design in tourism areas.
- Provide open space, parks and generous landscaping in tourism areas and resort.
- Carefully manage visitor flows at tourist attraction features.
- Apply specific controls on visitor use in protected land and marine areas, and inform visitors about these controls.

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure is important in giving greater assurance that development including tourism projects do not result in environmental problems. The EIA procedure has been adopted in Eritrea and will be applied to proposed tourism projects.

Development standards and design guidelines for tourist facilities are necessary to apply to ensure that facilities are well integrated into their natural and urban environment. Development standards are specified for density of development, building heights, building setbacks including from waterfronts and shorelines, site coverage by buildings, off-street parking, public access, sign controls, undergrounding utility lines, and beach and reef development capacities. Some guidelines on architectural, landscaping and engineering design of tourist areas and resorts have already been established, and others will be formulated and agreed with the competent authorities.

## **10. SOCIOCULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TOURISM**

Protection and enhancement of the cultural resources of Eritrea are essential. The cultural heritage of Eritrea, including archaeological and historic sites, architectural styles, cultural patterns, crafts and cuisine, provides major resources for developing tourism. It is also important to protect so that the Eritrean people can appreciate their heritage. Proposed legislation on the protection of cultural heritage must be adopted and applied, and proposals for designation of World Heritage Sites must be pursued. At the same time, culture is not frozen in time, and new cultural manifestations will be fostered and developed.

Managing the sociocultural impacts of tourism is also necessary. Tourism can generate positive sociocultural impacts, especially providing the stimulus for conservation of the cultural heritage. Uncontrolled development of tourism can also generate negative impacts. Management of sociocultural impacts involves several considerations:

- Involve local communities in the planning and development of tourism in their areas. This is important so that communities support tourism and receive direct benefits from it. Several approaches are set forth to involve local communities.

- Develop a form and scale of tourism that is appropriate for the local environment and society. This refers to social carrying capacity.
- Maintain the authenticity of local dance, music, drama, arts and crafts, while still encouraging contemporary forms of the expressive arts. This may require special training programmes and application of quality controls.
- Ensure that Eritreans have affordable access to tourist attractions and facilities. This may require special provision being made for discounted prices.
- Apply visitor organisation and control measure to prevent overcrowding of tourist attractions. Several techniques can be applied.
- Educate residents about tourism, through public awareness programmes, so that they understand tourism. Various techniques can be used to implement these programmes.
- Inform tourists about local customs and traditions, through tourist behaviour codes, so that they show respect for the local society. Various approaches can be used in implementing a tourist behaviour code.
- Design hotels and other tourist facilities that reflect local architectural styles in order to integrate them into the local cultural environment (especially outside urban areas). Eritrea has a wealth of traditional and historic architectural styles.
- Attract the types of tourists who will respect the local culture. This should guide all aspects of tourism development and marketing.
- Apply strict controls on, and keep tourism free from, trafficking and use of drugs, crime and prostitution. These are not now major problems in Eritrea and will continue to be prevented.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

The educational and vocational training policies of Eritrea and the current situation of human resources for tourism are reviewed.

Based on the market targets and projection of accommodation, presented previously, future training needs are approximated as follows:

- An annual average output of 300 to 400 trainees (new entrants to tourism).
- An annual average output of 150-200 existing staff retrained and upgraded.

The existing Hotel and Tourism Training Centre (HTTC) will be able to cope with these needs, either at its existing premises at the Selam Hotel or in an alternative complex. It is important that the numbers trained are kept in balance with the needs of the tourism sector, that quality improves and programmes are sustainable. The HTTC will retain flexibility so as to expand its programme as required.

A tourism Technical and Vocational Education and Training Committee will be organised in 1999. This committee will be advisory and consultative and be comprised of relevant government agencies, the University of Asmara and the private sector (through the tourism Association).

A human resources strategy is set forth for pre-employment and post-employment training and other programmes. For pre-employment training, the roles of the various involved institutions are described:

- Vocational secondary schools will offer courses on hotel, catering and travel.
- The HTTC will offer comprehensive programmes at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels.
- Private schools will eventually provide some training.
- Other public sector tertiary level institutions, especially the Asmara Institute of Commerce and Business, will collaborate with the HTTC.
- The University of Asmara is planning to include tourism in business studies and social sciences and develop tourism as a subject for special studies and research. It will eventually develop degree programmes on tourism management.

Post-employment training programmes, in which the HTTC will play a major role, include:

- Supervisory and management level training.
- Training for small hotel and tourism enterprises.
- Mobil training to upgrade skills in various parts of the country.
- Adjust and develop more programmes for distance learning applications.

Other training programmes to be undertaken are:

- Government tourism officials
- Sector-related specialists, especially business consultants and architects
- Tourist guides and tourist facility inspectors
- Language training
- Tourism sensitivity training of sector-related personnel including customs and immigration officials, retail shop and bank personnel, taxi drivers, museum attendants and police personnel.
- Public awareness programmes.

## **12. INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS FOR TOURISM**

Several institutional factors are essential for developing and managing tourism.

Organisation for tourism: The functions of the Ministry are set forth in the draft Tourism Proclamation 1998 which is pending adoption. The Ministry of Tourism has recently been reorganized to better carry out its functions. A tourism enterprises association has recently been organised and this will serve several important functions.

Tourism legislation: At present there are no adopted laws and regulations on tourism. However, the draft Tourism Proclamation 1998 contains the necessary laws and regulations and this will be adopted in the near future.

Attracting investment in tourism: Much financial investment is required for developing tourism in both the public and private sectors. Some private investment resources are available in Eritrea for small-scale projects but, for larger-scale projects, foreign investment, or joint venture investment is necessary. The Government has legislated investment Proclamation No. 59/1994, and intends to improve the facilitating mechanisms for both domestic and foreign investment initiatives. Now, various incentive provisions and other facilitation are provided by the government to prospective private sector investors. Public investment in tourism is especially needed for transportation and tourist attractions. Transportation development programmes are well under way. For developing the proposed protected areas and archaeological/historic sites and development of museums, international assistance will be necessary. The government will seek donor assistance to implement these projects.

### **13. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN AND MANAGING TOURISM**

It is important that the respective public and private sector responsibilities for plan implementation and tourism development be established. The policy is now for private development of commercial tourist facilities and services. The government is responsible for policy, planning and coordinating development, establishing and administering facility standards, some training, some marketing and promotion, statistical compilation and research and other tourism management matters. The government is also responsible for providing transportation and many of the tourist attractions. Utility services of water supply, electric power, telecommunications and waste management, are provided by independent companies and financed mostly from user fees. In tourism management, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) plays a catalytic role, mobilising support, collaborating with the private sector, coordinating with other government agencies, and building a consensus.

Implementing the national tourism plan requires several approaches:

- Plan adoption and implementation responsibilities. The Plan will be adopted by the government as the official guide for developing tourism. The overall management responsibility lies with the MOT. However, many aspects of project implementation are the responsibility of other government departments such as the Ministry of Agriculture (for protected areas), the National Museum for archaeological sites and museums and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications for Transportation development.
- Integration of the plan proposals. Many recommendations of the tourism plan are elements of other plans, such as city master plans, and will need to be integrated into those plans and programmes.
- Adoption of legislation. The tourism Proclamation 1998 and other legislation affecting tourism such as conservation of cultural heritage will be adopted.
- Programming project development and other actions. Development of specific projects and taking necessary actions will be done on a logical and systematic basis so that development is coordinated. A tourism action programme is appended to the plan report.
- Education and training. The quality of tourism services depends in large part on the adequacy of education and training programmes. These programmes and especially continued development of the HTTC will be pursued.

- Investment in tourism. Attracting sufficient amounts of private and public sector investment in tourism development is a prerequisite for implementation.

International and regional cooperation on tourism is important for Eritrea. The country is already maintaining active membership in the World Tourism Organization. Regional cooperation is important including participation in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Eritrea can also consider signing agreements with other countries in the region specifically on achieving cooperation on tourism.

Continuous effective management of the tourism sector by the MOT and the regional tourism offices, in cooperation with the private sector, is essential. An essential tool for management is the tourism management information system which has already been established and can be expanded in the future. Improving and maintaining quality controls on tourist attractions, facilities and services is necessary to maintain the vitality of the tourism sector. Important management functions also include carrying out a public awareness programme on tourism, maintaining the safety and security of tourists, and responding rapidly and effectively to crisis situations.

The MOT will continue to develop its capacity in order to handle its many management functions.

## **PART B PRIORITY AREAS AND PROJECTS**

Part B of the tourism plan contains detailed plans for urban areas and specific projects with associated analysis and development cost estimates. The projects were selected based on an assessment of the potential demand for the development, the type of development considered to be best suited to the specific area, and response to the tourism development needs throughout the country. There are fourteen high priority areas or projects and five low priority ones. These priority plans and projects are as follows.

### **Central Region**

- Asmara city and environs improvements with a variety of specific projects as described in the regional tourism development strategy.

### **Northern Red Sea Region**

- Mai-Wui and Akwaar spa resorts
- Massawa, Taulud (Tiwalot) and Sheik Saeed Island integrated development with a variety of specific projects as described in the tourism development strategy
- Gurgusum beach resort
- Dissei Island resorts
- Dahlak Kebir Island resorts
- Zula Bay including Ras Artau resort and other improvements
- Nakfa town and military sites improvements
- Asmara-Massawa Corridor including Debre Bizen Monastery, Embatkala and Semenawi park

### **Southern Red Sea Region**

- Assab city improvements

### **Anseba Region**

- Keren town improvements and St. Mariam Da'ari Shrine as described in the regional tourism development strategy
- Elaberer Farm agrotourism and country resort
- Halhal-Agordat hiking trail pilot project (joint project with Gash-Barka)

### **Southern Region**

- QoHaito Archaeological Park
- Metera Archaeological park

- Asmara-Zalambesa Corridor

### **Gash-Barka Region**

- Gash-Setit Wildlife Management Area facilities
- Mount Elit-Kunama Cultural Centre
- Halhal-Agordat hiking trail pilot project (joint project with Anseba)

All these projects will require public and private sector investment for implementation.