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PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT TOURISM SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

Disclaimer

This Roadmap was developed with the technical and financial support of the European Union and UNDP in Sri Lanka under the ‘Transforming Tourism in Sri Lanka: Emerging from crisis as a strong, resurgent and rebranded industry’ project. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the project, the EU or UNDP.

Acknowledgement

‘Putting People First: Building a More Resilient Tourism Sector in Sri Lanka’ Road Map was developed under the leadership and guidance of the Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and other relevant government organizations, alongside inputs from industry representatives, academia, and sector experts, with the technical and financial support of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sri Lanka.

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I Introduction

The world faces an unprecedented global health crisis with unparalleled impact on societies and livelihoods of millions of people. The travel and hospitality sectors are among the most affected by this crisis, but the sector is also uniquely equipped to bounce back and deliver tangible benefits to a wider segment of society, going even beyond the traditional scope of tourism. Globally tourism was the fastest growing economic sector in 2019, when it represented 30% of the world's exports of services (US\$1.5 trillion) and up to 45% of the total export of services in developing countries.¹ Tourism is a major employment engine for more vulnerable groups such as women and youth down its extensive value chain of travel, tourism and hospitality related goods and services. Investing in tourism revival is considered one of the fastest means to kick start other economic sectors affected by the pandemic. The sector has recovered from crises before and, given its proven importance at every level of society, must be supported to sustain and grow jobs again.

Tourism can be a platform for overcoming the pandemic. By bringing people together, tourism can promote solidarity and trust – crucial ingredients in advancing the global cooperation that is so urgently needed at this time.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES²

For Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality industry, Covid-19 containment measures were the second shock in two years. Pandemic-associated travel restrictions and closing of borders in March 2020, happened just as tourism showed very good signs of recovery post Easter Sunday terrorist attacks in 2019. The first cases of Covid-19 in Sri Lanka were detected from the tourism industry. Thereafter, the country went into lockdown as a measure to prevent spread of COVID19, and stopped international arrivals thereby bringing the entire tourism value chain to a standstill from mid-March onwards. This resulted in compounded impact in a sector that was yet not fully back to business. The industry, despite suffering its most serious setback ever, was proactive in supporting the health measures imposed by the government by offering hotels as quarantine centres for those entering the country. Currently, since the relaxing of the lockdown and inter-district travel restrictions in early June, hotels are opening up for domestic tourism subject to a firm guideline on health and safety measures. Sri Lanka plans to re-open for international tourism in August 2020.

Tourism is the third largest export earner in Sri Lanka in recent years. The sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was around 5% in 2018 and foreign exchange earnings has nearly doubled in four years from US\$ 2.4 billion (2014) to US\$ 4.3 billion in 2018. The number of tourists also grew over this period from 1.5 million to 2.3 million. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority estimated that the sector employs 250,000 people directly and up to 2 million, indirectly. Informal sector (unregistered and unclassified tourism operators) makes up more than 80% of accommodation and ancillary tourism services offered largely through internet and online booking engines.

The government is ambitious about its policy objectives for the tourism sector. The policy framework for the country 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor' aims to develop tourism as an 'environmental and domestic-culture friendly industry with extensive people's participation'. The document lays out sector targets for the next five years- increased visitor numbers (7 million annually) and revenues (up to USD 10

¹ https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-4/COVID19_Recommendations_English_1.pdf

² <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-can-promote-solidarity-un-secretary-general-antonio-guterres>

billion); increased employment in the sector (1 million) and an upgraded product in harmony with nature and culture. Ultimately, tourism incomes should benefit a wider segment of society and the impact must be more widely distributed in rural areas where other forms of employment are scarce. The Ministry of Tourism and Aviation and SLTDA plan to update the Tourism Strategic Plan to accommodate these policy targets and objectives guided by key national policies on sustainable development and climate change.

Tourist Arrivals Distribution from 2001 to 2025

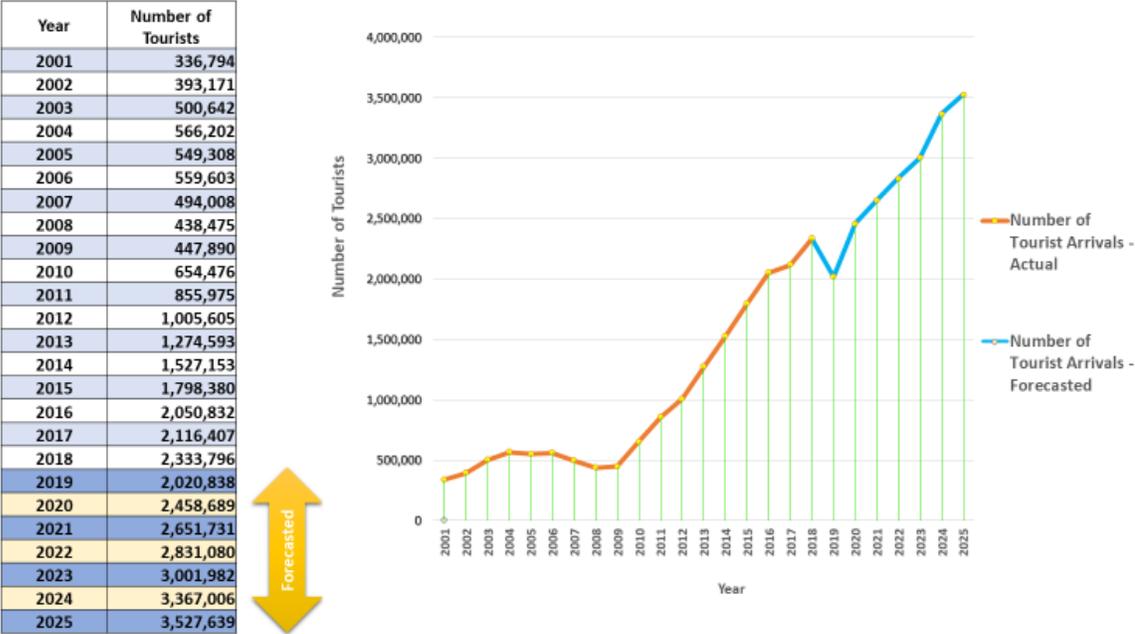


Figure 01: Tourist arrivals actual and projected pre-Covid scenario

The country’s tourist arrivals trajectory has been on an upward swing since 2009 signaled the end of the armed conflict. The unexpected set-back in April 2019 affected last year’s arrivals and earning which was projected to be highest thus far. 2020 was pegged as the year to achieve 2.5 million arrivals, significantly contributing to the economy and forex earning. The global projections show a reduction of between 50%-80% in tourist arrivals this year (UNWTO 2020).

Given the large number of livelihoods affected, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a series of relief measures in the form of low-interest loan for salary payments and working capital for hotels, destination management companies and other tourism establishments and, one-off payments to registered individual operators (Drivers and tour guides) in June. This comes on top of existing package of support announced by the Central Bank in April and May 2020 for all affected industries.

The current efforts at reviving the industry and supporting the millions that depended on tourism dollars, represents an opportunity to build back the industry in a transformative and sustainable way. Many key building blocks of this transformation have already been set in place- destination development, regulatory reforms, developing indigenous products and services and upskilling the workforce. This roadmap will serve to inform the government efforts to develop a strategic action plan aligned with sustainable development priorities (SDGs), with a focus on conservation of natural resources, an empowered workforce and a strong focus on resilience to future shocks which should be strongly in-built to recovery.

The roadmap's Priorities, Strategies and Policy Actions are based on inputs from multiple sources and documents. These include extensive consultations and the subsequent findings of the Rapid Assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on Sri Lanka's tourism sector³, and proposals submitted to the SLTDA and Ministry of Tourism and Aviation by Industry Associations, Universities, Provincial Councils, tourism experts, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce⁴. The recommendations are also sourced upon the UN World Tourism Organization's technical resources⁵ on global practices and recommendations for recovery, the Tourism Revival Action Plan⁶, Advisory Note from the World Bank⁷, as well as webinars conducted by industry and discussions with government and private sector officials.

The objective of the Roadmap is therefore to guide Sri Lanka's tourism sector towards a more sustainable and resilient post-COVID-19 revival. The Roadmap and the accompanying Action Plan will help the industry and development partners/donors to rally around a single vision and plan, guided by common priorities for short, medium- and long-term sector investments and enhance readiness of the sector to cope with unpredicted shocks and disasters. The Roadmap presents a framework for industry revival and recovery with a focus on longer term transformation and increased/improved ability to cope with shocks and disasters. It sets out guiding principles, and a set of practical interventions framed around three strategic priorities and a number of policy actions with targeted milestones. The Roadmap will explore the financing landscape for tourism development and institutional readiness to implement the policy actions. The Roadmap covers both immediate interventions necessary for revival of the sector to medium to longer term support required for sector transformation.

The roadmap will inform the articulation of the new sector strategy (Tourism Development Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024).

³ By SLTDA and supported by UNDP

⁴ Please find the full list of source documents in Annex 2

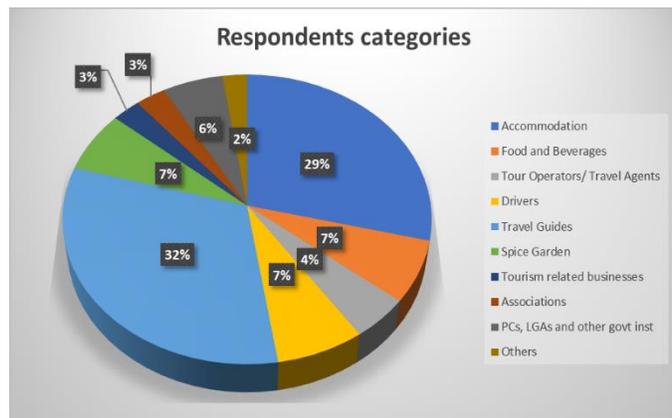
⁵ *"Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package"*, United Nations World Tourism Organization, May 2020.

⁶ *"Tourism Revival Action Plan"*, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020.

⁷ *"Sri Lanka Tourism Note"*, World Bank, 2020.

II Key Findings of the Rapid Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Tourism

Tourism sector is one of the critical sectors of the economy. It has multiplier effect across the economy as close to 40 other industries are directly or indirectly linked to the tourism sector. To understand the impact of COVID19 lockdown and travel restrictions on the sector, UNDP supported SLTDA to conduct a rapid impact assessment covering the entire tourism value chain. The assessment was conducted in May (early to mid) with a stratified random sampling of 550 people across the nine provinces from the tourism sector. Of the respondents, 54.5 percent were from the informal sector. The assessment used a mixed approach for evidence gathering through questionnaires, focus group discussions⁸, and key informant interviews conducted via mobile and online communication tools. This rapid assessment was conducted in a short timeframe. Therefore, researchers acknowledge that there may be some limitations with the findings of the study. Relief measures provided after the period of assessment (early to end May) are not reflected in this assessment.



1. Majority of the formal jobs protected but with reduced salaries

66.7 percent of surveyed employers in hotels and travel agent segment of tourism sector reduced salaries of employees but retained staff. 26.6 percent said that they terminated contracts. A level of solidarity can be seen within the sector from the fact that 69 percent of employees in management and supervisory categories took a pay cut. Overall 37 percent of the employees received reduced salaries.

2. Loss of revenue in the tourism sector is unprecedented

Unlike previous crisis that negatively impacted the tourism sector, COVID19 pandemic brought the travel and tourism sector to a complete standstill. Booking and reservations fell by over 90 percent. Of this 57 percent were cancellations and 33 percent were rescheduled to later in the year. Cancellations and reductions in bookings has resulted in 97 percent revenue loss in hotels and accommodation sector, and 100 percent revenue loss for tour operators and guides.

3. Daily wage earners and informal workers are badly affected.

Daily wage earners and informal workers are badly affected, specifically in auxiliary industries (such as cleaning and laundry services) supporting the tourism sector. 27 percent of surveyed hotels and travel agents said that they cancelled services. Of the 27 percent, 53 percent cancelled sanitary or cleaning services, 42 percent security services, 97 percent promotional services (such as advertising etc.), and 26 percent of maintenance services.

4. Women working in the tourism sector are disproportionately affected

Women in the tourism sector are disproportionately affected by the COVID19 crisis. Two factors contribute to this disproportionate impact – 1) more women are engaged in lower end of the value chain

⁸ 3 FGD were conducted – with provincial council representatives, government institutions managing tourism destinations (Central Cultural Fund, wildlife department, Department of Archaeology, Department of Museums etc.), and industry associations.

in daily wage jobs and in auxiliary services; and 2) traditional attitudes towards women and unpaid care work, and their role in safeguarding the health and well-being of the family. 97 percent of the cleaning staff who lost their job were females, and among those who lost their jobs in hotels, around 67 percent were female receptionists, front office staff etc. The assessment shows preference was given to retaining male employees.

5. Despite loss of employment, labor shortages are expected

The Labour Demand Survey of 2017 indicated that there is a labour shortage within the sector due to non-competitive wages, inadequate training and lack of interest in working in the tourism sector among others. Surveyed employers expect the COVID19 crisis to further augment labour shortages and anticipate as much as 25 percent of the current workforce may not return to the sector due to fears of contracting COVID19.

6. Prevalence of private sector financing in the tourism sector means moratorium measures are not being applied evenly across the sector resulting in increased debt burden

The government has provided relief measures to support the tourism sector during the crisis, including moratorium against interest payments etc. However, 82.5 percent of the respondents in chauffeur and tour guides categories that they are financed through private financing institutions, and leasing companies, and are continuing to pay interest on their loans despite total loss of revenue. Informal debt has increased among both businesses and individuals.

7. Limited accessibility to relief measures by informal tourism sector

The government relief measures to the tourism sector ranged from one off grants to workers, to moratorium against interests and payments, and loans to businesses. However, these relief measures are limited to formal sector, and with an estimated 70 to 80 percent of the sector being informal, majority of the people engaged within the sector are not able to access relief measures.

8. Risk preparedness within the sector needs to be improved.

Previous shocks (tsunami, terrorist attacks etc.), and the COVID19 crisis has highlighted the importance of disaster and risk preparedness. The rapid assessment shows that employees do not receive adequate training or information to manage emergencies. SLTDA has a crisis management plan but there is no ministerial or provincial or local level **disaster management or crisis management plans**. Only airlines and star hotels indicated that they have disaster management plans, but other businesses surveyed for the assessment indicated that they do not have disaster or crisis management plans.

9. Systemic challenges within the sector have exacerbated the impact of COVID19

The assessment shows that existing systemic challenges such as issues with formalization of the sector, and weak internal governance mechanisms within the sector have further exacerbated the impact of COVID19. Effective insurance schemes (including for loss of income) for businesses, employees, and independent service providers are not available. Tourism sector associations (such as hotels associations, tour guide associations etc.,) currently do not have clear plans to promote health and well-being, economic resilience or professional growth of their members. However, ad-hoc efforts measures were taken during the COVID19 lockdown by some associations to reduce economic burden on their members.

It is evident that the economic impact of the Covid-19 lockdown goes well beyond income loss for hoteliers and tour operators. The impact on the many diverse links of the value chain need to be understood, evaluated and closely monitored over the recovery period. Sustainability- both in terms of

social and environmental safeguards, and improved resilience to future shocks must be integral to any strategy underpinning the future of tourism in Sri Lanka.

III. Principles Guiding Tourism Recovery and Transformation

The strategic priorities identified in the Roadmap are informed by three principles to facilitate transformation of Sri Lanka's tourism sector.

1. Revival of the Sector Must Target the Entire Value Chain

Tourism is a major job creator and a lifeline for many rural entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. Tourism is a potentially major employment engine for vulnerable groups such as women, and youth in rural areas with little or no-income opportunity. As such, recovery efforts must be wide ranging to target the entire value chain of the hospitality industry, from star-class hotels with large workforces and supply chains, to SMEs to individual operators and suppliers to the industry.

This requires:

- Developing multi-sector approaches to mitigate and manage the loss of livelihood and income insecurity in the hospitality industry (i.e working with labour, agriculture, health, skills development and industries)
- Targeting the most vulnerable women, youth and disadvantaged groups (disabled, remote rural communities dependent on tourism) in recovery initiatives to assure they remain in the industry
- Ensuring that targeted relief measures are available and accessible to tourism operators and hospitality workers is vital for revival and recovery.

2. Foster a Whole of Government and Whole of Industry Approach to Tourism Recovery

Tourism contributes directly and indirectly, through its multiplier effect, to allied services such as transport, construction, agriculture and food processing, finance, technology providers, craftspeople, artisans etc. Tourism is a facilitator of cultural exchange and mutual understanding and peace, as it counters discrimination and prejudice between individuals and societies. Past crisis in Sri Lanka has shown that tourism can bounce back strongly and quickly, underpinned by:

- Strengthened coordination with services for relief and recovery available at provincial level and improved coordination among tourism resources management agencies (Cultural Fund, Wildlife Department, Coast Conservation, Sri Lanka Railways)
- Keeping an open and transparent line of communication to industry and individuals on recovery/relief
- Ensuring easily accessible and responsive grievance recording and redress systems
- Ensuring that regular and systematic stakeholder consultations underpin the recovery priorities and timelines

3. Sustainability and Resilience Underpinning the Transformation

Recovery should be approached as an opportunity to steer the industry towards implementing longer term policy goals, while jump starting the sector transformation into a new model of sustainable consumption and production. The tourism sector responds to a few key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- on decent work (SDG 8), on natural environment (SDGs 14 and 15), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate change (SDG 13) however specific actions in the sector can influence gender parity(SDG 5), skilled workforce (SDG 4) and green urban design (SDG 11).

For decades, Sri Lanka has been pegged into the mass, low-spending tourism market, and this ‘branding’ overshadows recent development of niche, high-end products and services around nature, health and wellness and adventure. To implement government’s vision for tourism transformation towards ‘indigenous’ yet upgraded, high yielding markets is required. This sector transformation relies heavily on the key elements listed below;

- Sustainable tourism to be at the centre of the national tourism agenda in moving forward
- Relief investments to target upgrading of facilities, compliance to health and safety measures and upskilling of the workforce, etc.
- Promoting safe and decent jobs and ensuring modern, upgraded training facilities are in place to produce a skilled hospitality workforce that attracts more women and youth
- Ensuring traveler safety and security in country and consumer protection measures to deal with the uncertain market.
- Supporting the transition from informal to formal - through regularization and standardisation of MSME and small operators in the value chain
- Develop new and niche markets around indigenous offerings such as wellness, adventure, nature, local culture and cuisine, and marine-based tourism
- Promote and incentivize domestic tourism to retain tourism spending in country
- Increase investor confidence and develop new financing mechanisms such as green and climate financing to incentivize sustainability focused investments in the areas of energy, water, waste and disaster risk management

IV. Strategic Priorities for Tourism Transformation and Resilience

The roadmap proposes three strategic priorities that offer a menu of policy actions to guide investments in the tourism sector which aim to mitigate and manage the impacts of the current crisis while facilitating longer-term transformation towards a resilient tourism sector. Proposed policy actions are elaborated by key milestones and indicative timelines conveying the need for urgent, coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach to implementation.

Strategic Priority 1 - Economic and Institutional Recovery in an Ongoing Pandemic

Immediate relief to the sector should focus on two main outcomes: 1) ensuring the survival of the industry (hotels, restaurants, travel and tour operators, guides) and 2) preparedness for business resumption in a 'new normal' environment.

Financial measures that offer liquidity to firms, protect worker livelihoods and prevent closures and layoffs have already been rolled out by the government. However, uptake of such offers, especially by the MSMEs may be slow due to inability of many MSMEs to produce bankable proposals with supporting collateral. Partial income support through a one-time grant to vulnerable sections are part of the government approved relief package. However, the large number of informal tourism workers and unregistered small business, homestays have no access to formal relief measures as yet. Developing simple and transparent criteria, with support of Provincial Councils, for relief packages aimed at the informal sector and unregistered MSMEs could pave the way for future industry regulation and standardization efforts.

Resumption of tourism is the best strategy to revive closed businesses. While Sri Lanka's domestic tourism market is not adequate to sustain the industry, it is still a strong start for the nearly dormant industry. From June to October 2020, Sri Lankan's will be the major consumer of tourism products and services, hence a strong strategy pushing and incentivizing local tourists should be developed with private sector (credit cards, banks, hotels). High spending locals who normally holiday out of Sri Lanka are now a captive market for local tourism. This window should be exploited.

Where possible, alternate sources of revenue be encouraged for tourism-oriented small business to diversify their product line and offer products/services through e-commerce. This would ensure that informal businesses engaged in handicrafts, batik, silk, spices etc are able to tide over periods of low tourism demand.

The rapid assessment has shown that the sector is ill-prepared and has little or no contingency planning/ risk management strategies to cope with shocks. Given that Covid-19 is an ongoing crisis and could affect the industry in waves in the next few years, risk preparedness, crisis management and coordination between centre and province becomes a crucial aspect of effective recovery and future planning. Tourism is a devolved subject and Provincial Councils and local authorities regulate much of the MSME sector and individual operators. Standards and capabilities vary greatly between centre and province and also between provinces, depending on the region's interest and focus on tourism. There may be duplication between relief measures rolled out by Provincial Administration and the Central Government. A strong coordination mechanism is recommended to strengthen relations between centre-province for both relief distribution, risk communication and monitoring of sector revival.

Consumer protection and confidence for tourism resumption is key. Conflict resolution and booking cancellations have to be handled professionally to increase confidence in the industry. A crisis

communications plan will ensure the open lines of contact between centre-province and local tourism industry and prepare sector for future shocks. The detailed health and safety guideline issues by SLTDA and Ministry of Health require all tourism sectors to upgrade facilities and practices and receive a certificate of compliance to receive foreign visitors. Many MSMEs will find this a challenging process and will require awareness at the minimum and possibly financial and technical support to upgrade existing facilities to achieve certification.

Ticketing for transportation and key attractions have always been problematic in Sri Lanka. For safety of tourists and nationals both, it is recommended that online ticketing for all major attractions and transport services be available. Combined tickets and contactless entry to major sites such as Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, national parks, museums and gardens will ease congestion, queuing and reduce person-to-person contact.

Policy Actions	Milestones
Roll out service delivery readiness actions	Operational Guidelines with health protocols for post Covid-19 tourism Roadmap and multi-donor programme launched
Relief and liquidity support for industry	Relief measures for job retention/ income loss rolled out
MSME support programme developed	SMEs supported to access financial bailout and other relief measures.
Crisis management and communication protocols in place	Crisis communications plan updated and helpdesk at SLTDA established
Implemented consumer protection measures	MSMEs and informal sector support programme developed and launched → Registration of informal MSMEs expedited using provincial service centres in key destinations → MSMEs supported with awareness, training and upgrading to follow Operational Guidelines Tourist Police service upgraded
Domestic tourism revival plan in place	Domestic tourism revival strategy/mechanism in place
Improve ticketing and transportation services	

Strategic Priority 2 - Sustainable and Upgraded Indigenous Tourism, Marketing and Financing

The recovery process will likely be uneven and uncertain in the immediate future, as such markets will need to be closely and carefully monitored. Marketing in this 'new normal' cannot follow the same rules as many international destinations would be vying for the same tourist dollars. Approach to these markets would need to be highly agile and targeted. Regional travelers and countries with good air connectivity and open borders should be targeted first with incentives. Market intelligence and digital marketing campaigns are recommended using new, inexpensive social media platforms to the extent possible.

Reinvigorating tourism in Sri Lanka requires a new vision for an improved tourism experience (unique product and service quality, and tourist safety, consumer protection) underpinned by strong public-private collaboration. This is strongly recommended by donors and private sector alike. New products and services upgraded destination infrastructure and supporting MSMEs to come up to standard are key strategies towards sector transformation. Sri Lanka has an international reputation as a low-end mass tourism destination and this may not be the best image to 'sell' to a post-pandemic market. Developing niche products and services around nature-based and wilderness experiences, small group adventure tourism and wellness tourism (indigenous Ayurveda, yoga, health retreats, meditation etc) and upgrading the under-developed marine tourism (sailing, water sports, marine wildlife, small cruises) would have better opportunity in a competitive global market.

Sri Lanka has a rich nature, culture, wilderness offering to attract a new breed of tourists looking for off the beaten track sites and experiences. The traditional destinations and attractions have unresolved issues and reputation as over-crowded and under-serviced (Yala and Horton Plains National Parks, Sigiriya, Kandy etc). Promoting new regional destinations away from the main attractions (new national parks and cultural sites) and using creative economy to promote city-based tourism (performances, museums, shopping, cafes) are other strategies catering to markets with an appetite for new offerings. Events and conferences are other markets that could support industry revival during in the near future, as many other countries still continue with restrictions on tourism and international travel.

Supporting MSMEs to upgrade their quality standards and meet sector standards will be key priority for the resurgent sector. Over 90% of rooms are offered by small and medium scale operators with very little guidance on safety, hygiene, product quality and with no access to business management/ finance management skills. In collaboration with provincial governments, SLTDA could launch an MSME support programme which requires such service providers to comply with minimum standards and register with the Provincial Council or SLTDA in order to qualify for relief packages. Tailored financial services to the MSME sector, such as loan re-structuring and rescheduling, support to prepare business plans for new tourism products or upgrading of existing facilities, crisis management plans and risk insurance schemes should be introduced for the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Relief and financial support meted out in the post-Covid period should nudge SMEs towards a more sustainable path, adopting circular economy best practices such as green building, renewable energy, water and waste management and disaster risk management -given that most hotels are situated in the coastal belt or water-scarce Dry Zone.

Financing sector transformation will also require a new generation of incentives for sustainability. The tourism sector leaves a large footprint in consuming natural resources and emitting wastes. Containing these footprints and turning the industry towards sustainable consumption and production is at the heart of the Sustainable Tourism Certification process which was launched in 2019. Incentivizing both large and small hospitality operators to adopt the sustainability criteria through innovative financing mechanisms (such as low-interest green lending programmes) are important steps towards an upgraded product, that can attract high-yielding market segments. Importantly, the sector should also re-invest in protecting and preserving the natural environment on which their product relies heavily. Community-based tourism models in unique locations (Knuckles, Kalpitiya, Ella etc) can support both conservation and the lower end of the tourism value chain effectively- and such models should be supported/ promoted with donors to maintain ecological design/ service quality and marketing outreach. To this end, the sustainable tourism certification programme be expanded to MSMEs and select destinations in the next two years.

Environmental regulations are embedded in to the sustainable certification criteria, however specialized guidelines and standards and a new classification (accommodation and guides) for eco and nature based tourism is recommended if Sri Lanka aims to attract niche, high-end nature-tourism.

Key policy actions with accompanying milestones are below.

Policy Actions	Milestones
Develop a new tourism vision and niche, diversified products	New vision and Branding developed Visit Sri Lanka app version 0-3 New accommodation classification gazetted
Introduce financial stimulus for sustainable tourism and new Financing mechanisms including green financing options	Sustainable tourism certification extended to SMEs and destinations Green lending % to the sector increased
Review investment bottlenecks and streamline processes	Business process re-engineering and simplified applications for tourism investors
Invest in and promote destination events and conference market	
Standards and guidelines for upgraded products	Guidelines and minimum standards for eco-and-nature based tourism established for accommodation and guides
Improve market intelligence and targeted promotions	Tourism Satellite Account and dashboard to monitor source markets
Roll our effective destination marketing programme	Global promotional campaign in targeted source markets launched

Strategic Priority 3 - Stronger institutions and a Resilient Workforce

Institutional and regulatory reforms for tourism governance has been on the cards for a few years. The Strategic Plan 2017-2020 prioritizes regulatory reform as its first pillar of intervention. Overcoming the fragmentation of the national governance bodies for tourism development (SLTDA) tourism promotion (SLTPB) conventions (SLCB) and tourism training (SLITHM) is at the core of these reforms. In addition stronger cross sectoral collaboration with other sectors including transport, aviation, natural and cultural site management agencies, local authorities etc. is important for tourism development. In addition, vertical coordination between central and provincial tourism development bodies is critical to deliver a coherent recovery support and implement a new tourism development strategy.

Such regulatory reform should be underpinned by democratic principles, such as participatory decision-making, ensuring all stakeholder voices are heard, transparent mechanisms for relief distribution and grievance redress, strong monitoring systems and respecting the local autonomy while maintaining minimum industry standards.

Upgraded IT and digital solutions to facilitate industry regulation and standardization are recommended. This includes quick certification, self-assessment tools, online registration, access to information and technical support packages, online learning and capacity building tools. Digital solutions and platforms for effective coordination among sectors and between centre and province is necessary in a post-Covid era.

Upskilling the existing workforce, especially during periods of low tourism demand, through on-line and tailored practical assessments will help prepare the workforce respond to the new needs of the sector. Many of the skilled workforce, especially those in the SME sector have not had formal training or possess marketable proof of skills. Retention of the existing workforce is the immediate priority. In the future however, The Sri Lanka Institute for Tourism Management will be supported to introduce a new curricular and an upgraded academic experience for its graduates. Expanding hospitality employment opportunities to women and youth, especially in rural areas is key to ensuring that benefits of tourism is spread more evenly in society.

Sustainable tourism products and standards for social and environmental safeguards should be mainstreamed across the sector. This includes employment and income security, opportunity for safety and hygiene at work, ensuring health and injury insurance for tourism operators, especially individuals, stronger industry unions and associations with capacity to self-regulate, maintain standards and contingency funds for periods of low tourism flows. These are key recommendations to build human capital and ensure risk management for long term sector resilience.

Policy Actions	Milestones
Improved and harmonized governance for tourism sector	New Tourism Act passed through Parliament New tourism governance/institutional structure legalized
Strengthen centre-province coordination	Provincial tourism service centres established and provincial coordination mechanism activated
Update and implement Tourism Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024	Updated strategy 2021-2024 and multi-partner tourism development programme launched Public-Private Partnership strategy rolled out
Introduce new digital systems to support sector transformation	
Upskill the existing workforce	New online hospitality training programmes for upskilling workforce
Invest in attracting more youth and women	New curricular for SLITHM available Outreach programme to attract/retain more skilled women and youth in hospitality
Develop risk management and labour protection strategies	

Key Milestones for 2020-2021

2020			2021			
MAY - JUN	JUL - SEP	OCT - DEC	JAN - MAR	APR - JUN	JUL - SEP	OCT - ONWARDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Guidelines for post Covid-19 tourism Tourism entry protocols Domestic tourism resumes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relief measures for sector Roadmap and multi-partner programme Tourism app initial version List of health guideline compliant accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Development Strategy 2021-2024 launched SMEs support programme Tourist Police upgraded Tourism Satellite Account Online and practical upskilling courses for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fully developed Visit Sri Lanka app launched Amended Tourism Act Provincial centres for coordinated tourism services Wellness tourism standards and guidelines Global promotional campaign launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New accommodation classification gazetted New online hospitality training programmes for upskilling workforce New legal and institutional structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eco-and-nature based tourism guidelines New curricular for SLITHM available Country dashboard to monitor source markets SME-focused sustainability/green financing package launched Contactless/online ticketing for tourism sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New destinations launched New tourism itineraries with diversified cultural and natural sites Guidelines and minimum standards for eco-and-nature based tourism Growth in new market segments (wellness, nature, marine etc) Outreach programme for more women and youth in hospitality

Strategic Priorities	Milestones	2020			2021	2022	2023	2024
		Q2	Q3	Q4				
1. Economic and institutional recovery in an ongoing health emergency	· Operational Guidelines with Health protocols for post Covid-19 tourism	Orange						
	· Relief measures for the sector rolled out	Blue	Blue					
	· SMEs supported to access financial bailout and other relief measures		Orange					
	· Roadmap and multi-partner programme developed		Blue					
	· Crisis communications plan updated and helpdesk at SLTDA established		Orange					
	· MSMEs and informal sector support programme developed and launched		Blue	Blue	Blue			
	-Registration of informal MSMEs expedited using provincial service centres in key destinations		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue			
	-MSMEs supported with awareness, training and upgrading to follow Operational Guideline		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue			
	· Tourist Police service upgraded			Orange	Orange			
	· Domestic tourism revival strategy/mechanism in place		Blue					
2. Sustainable and Upgraded Indigenous Tourism, Marketing and Financing	· New vision and branding developed			Blue				
	· Visit Sri Lanka app version 0-3		Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
	· New accommodation classification gazetted			Blue				
	· Business process re-engineering and simplified application for tourism investors			Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
	· Sustainable tourism certification extended to SMEs and destinations				Blue	Blue		
	· Green lending % to the sector increased				Blue	Blue		
	· Guidelines and minimum standards for eco-and-nature based tourism established for accommodation and guides				Blue	Blue		
	· Tourism Satellite Account and dashboard to monitor source markets			Orange	Orange			
	· Global promotional campaign in targeted source markets launched				Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
3. Stronger institutions and a resilient workforce	· Updated Strategy 2021-2024 and multi-partner tourism development programme launched			Blue				
	· New Tourism Act passed through Parliament				Orange			
	· New tourism governance/institutional structure legalized				Blue			
	· Public-Private Partnership strategy rolled out				Blue			
	· Provincial tourism service centres established and provincial coordination mechanism activated		Orange	Orange	Orange			
	· New online hospitality training programmes for upskilling workforce			Blue	Blue			
	· New curricular for SLITHM available				Orange			
	· Outreach programme to attract/retain more skilled women and youth in hospitality				Blue	Blue		
	· Guidelines and minimum standards for eco-and-nature based tourism				Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange

Annex 2: Documents Consulted for Roadmap Development

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