

**TOURISM AND CULTURAL SECTOR REVIEW**

**BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE**

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## **BACKGROUND**

Sierra Leone is a small country situated on the West Coast of Africa (about 74,000square kilometer), with a population between four and five million. The Country is endowed with abundant and diversified natural and cultural attraction prominent among which are the beautiful sandy beaches, picturesque landscape and sceneries, attractive Islands, highlands (mountains and hills), waterfalls, plenty of natural wildlife sanctuaries and parks, agreeable weather, a rich cultural heritage and hospitable people

Various studies conducted on the tourism and cultural sectors have confirmed this assertion. The Industrial Market Research Limited funded by the Overseas Development Association undertook a preliminary assessment of the country's tourism assets in 1972/73. A management consultant sponsored by the commission of European communities earned out another study in 1982. Individuals and other organization have also carried out many studies on tourism and cultural status in the country

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Ministry is to foster the promotion of sustainable tourism and cultural development through the formulation/ reviews of policies and legislative regulations, participatory development, partnership, and monitory and evaluation; to enhance sustained socio-economic growth, natural and cultural resources preservation and conservation and contribute in the alleviation of poverty in the country.

## **VISION**

A decentralized, well coordinated, competitive and higher value cultural and tourism industry; that enhance promotion and ensure sustainable and environmental friendly development of the Industry to achieve the following: -

- Provision of variety of job opportunities over a wide range of skill levels.
- Foreign exchange generation
- people –centered and environmentally friendly Tourism and Cultural development

- alleviating poverty amongst the poor and marginalized local communities
- co-ordination and co-operation among Key Stakeholders in the Industry
- promotion of local community entrepreneurship
- enhance economic diversification
- promotion of environment awareness and management
- cultural revitalization, heritage preservation and social stability

### **POLICY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

Since the inception of the Ministry, there have been no defined and constituted policy documents for the Tourism and the Cultural Sectors. The Ministry has been operating on the Tourism Development Act and the “Blue Print” Document as a guide. The following are the policy objectives and strategies inscribed in the “Blue Print” Document.

- A. Adopt a range of measures aimed at improving the Competitiveness of Tourism and Culture and all aspect relating to the sector
  1. Develop a national investment code.
  2. Review and update all Tourism Document, Master Plan, and Development Act.
  3. Replace relics and identify new ones.
  4. Launch the reopening of Bintumani Hotel and others
- B. Encourage local and international tourism develop, promotion and marketing as a source through which the Ministry will increase participation in the national economy in generating foreign earnings.
  1. Hold a stakeholders conference, including private and public sectors.

2. Identify and demarcate tourism development areas.
  3. Soar and stabilize structures at Bunce Island and purchase one (ship) outboard engine.
  4. Attend Seminars/ Conferences, Trade Fairs and Exhibitions World Mart.
- C. Be an engine for employment creation, poverty alleviation and reduction of gender inequality .
1. Rehabilitate structures and fence Aberdeen Cultural village
  2. Undertake road network construction in Kono, Kurubola to Loma Mountains
  3. Construct three (3) tent composite at the mouth of Outamba River
- D. Improve the quality of life of the people, protection of national and cultural heritage and to contribute to reducing economic instability and vulnerability of the nation.
1. Construct three (3) Regional Offices in three provincial headquarter towns of Bo, Makeni and Kenema.
  2. Stabilize Bunce Island, develop talented Artists

### **CONSTRAINTS**

The growth of Tourism and Cultural in Sierra Leone has been constrained by several factors. These include, the following: -

1. **Tourism and Culture not a government priority.** The Tourism and Cultural Sectors is not yet a priority to government. This is reflected in the budget allocation and the allocation of certain logistics and equipment to other ministries.
2. **Low budget allocation and lack of funding.** Low and meager budget allocation and lack of funding to the Ministry is the greatest impediment to the growth and sustainable development of the Tourism and Cultural Sectors. There is need therefore to increase the budget allocation to the Ministry, as this will enable the Ministry to effectively carryout its statutory obligations. Project earmarked for development and implementations have been left undone due to lack of funds and meager budget allocation.
3. **No defined and constituted National Tourism and Cultural Policies.** Policies are defined guidelines which navigate, pilot activities of institutions, organizations etc. An institution without a policy will be very difficult to develop. Many donor and funding organizations always demand for policy objectives and strategies before giving any forms of assistance, loan or technical support.
4. **Human Resource and low-level skills.** There are inadequate professionals trained in both tourism and cultural development and promotion techniques. There is also a wide staffing gap in the administrative sector of the Ministry
5. **Inadequate product development.** Sierra Leone needs to diversify its tourism portfolio in order to exploit its niche market. In order to derive maximum benefits from tourism and cultural assets, there is need for the country to develop a wide product base. This will increase the number of tourist arrivals and the length of stay, thereby increasing the occupancy rates and foreign exchange earnings of the country.
6. **Problem with the acquisition of Land for Tourism and Cultural Development purposes.**  
It is an acknowledge fact that access to land is a crucial factor in tourism development and the land in the seafront is a popular

site for tourism development worldwide. Unfortunately, in Sierra Leone, Freetown and its environs in particular, most of these lands are in the hands of private individuals, who most times demand exorbitant lease rents from Potential Investors. This has discouraged many potential investors in the Tourism industry. It will therefore be necessary for the government to demarcate Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) throughout the country and compensation paid to those currently holding title deeds to these lands.

7. **Lack of a Permanent office Accommodation:** The Ministry of Tourism and Culture did not have permanent and adequate office accommodation. The office accommodations have been transferred from place to place. At one time the Ministry was allocated the Government wharf building for reoccupation. The Ministry is yet to access this building for permanent reoccupation.
8. **Lack of Logistics and Transportation.** The ministry supervises and co-ordinates the activities of a sector that is very dynamic. Currently this cannot be effectively done because of logistical constraints. At the moment the Ministry of Tourism and Culture did not have a single vehicle or motorbike. It is hoped that opinion leaders in government will one day provide the Ministry with vehicles, motorbikes as well as communication Equipments.
9. **Inadequate tourism development incentives.** The investment code for Sierra Leone has not come into force yet. The 1990 Tourism Development Act has provisions for Development Aids and Incentives that should be granted to potential investors in the Sector, but a good number of investors are not benefiting from these provisions. It is hope that, when the investment code would have come into effect, investors in the Tourism industry would be encourage to invest in the Sector.
- 10 **In adequate Infrastructure in potential Tourism and Cultural Development Areas.** The underdeveloped road and transportation, communication and water supply facilities, as well as other inadequate tourist facilities in Potential tourist

destination have hampered the rapid growth of tourism and culture in Sierra Leone.

- 11 **Inadequate marketing of Sierra Leone as a major tourist destination.** Marketing of a country as a tourist destination requires substantial financial resources. The marketing of Sierra Leone as a tourism destination has been inadequate due to limited financial resources.
- 12 **Land Tenure.** The process of acquiring land for tourism infrastructure development is slow, thus inhibiting and impeding investment in the Sector

The above key constraints are not exhaustive but are the primary constraints which have greatly impeded the growth of the tourism and Cultural Sectors in the Country.

### **NATURAL AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE**

Sierra Leone is endowed with huge and diversified natural and cultural assets, which need to be fully exploited in the drive to enhance sustainable tourism development and contribute towards poverty reduction.

The name “Sierra Leone” itself is attractive to tourist. The following are some of the natural and cultural attraction in the country.

1. A rich and diverse cultural heritage and historical monuments – eg. The cotton tree, Sierra Leone National Museum, Bunce Island etc
2. Abundant sunshine all the year round
3. Friendly, hospitable and peace loving people and overall political stability
4. The Bintumani Mountain (1945m), the highest in the subregion
5. The Loma Mountains
6. The Tingi Hills

- 7 Outamba Kilimi National Park and Hippotamous Den on the River Kabba
- 8 Forest Elephants in the Gola Forest and at Outamba Kilimi National Park.
- 9 Mamunta Mayosoh Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- 10 Tiwai island Wildlife Sancturary
- 11 Tacugama Chimpazee Santuary
- 12 The Bumbuna Waterfalls
- 13 Charlottee Waterfalls
- 14 Lake Sonfon
- 15 Monumental Slave Trade Grave on Bunce Island
- 16 Guma Valley – No two (2) River nature Trail
- 17 Aberdeen Greek Water Bird Sanctuary
- 18 Yawri Bay – Kagboro Creek
- 19 Sierra Leone River Estuary's
- 20 Konakridee – Yelibuya Wetland
- 21 Fourah Bay College Botani Resource and Heddle's Farm
- 22 The White and beautiful sandy beaches along the Peninsula, Lumley Aberdeen Beach, Lakka Beach, St. Michael Lodge, Kuta Beach. Tokkey Beach, Kent Beach etc
- 23 Plantain Island
- 24 Banana Island
- 25 Turtle's Island
- 26 York Island

- 27 Christmas Island (Bonthe / Sherbro) Island
- 28 Targrin – Lungi Sandy Beaches
- 29 Eureka Creek
- 30 The Seventy (70) miles stretch off white sandy beach from Sulima in the Pujehun District to Bohol in the Bonthe District. (Turners Peninsula)

The above list of Natural and Cultural Assets of Sierra Leone is not exhaustive, as there are many more unknown and unidentified natural and cultural assets in this beautiful country.

In this context, a lot of dividends can be realized if these natural and cultural assets are judiciously exploited by meaningful development of the following areas.

- a. Mountain climbing
- b. Eco-tourism
- c. Cultural and “Roots” related to tourism
- d. Bird watching
- e. Rural and bush Safari
- f. Rural and Village Tourism
- g. Water Sports, Deep Sea and ornamental fishing
- h. Sporting, Clubs and Multi – Purpose Recreation Centres
- i. Crocodile Farming
- j. Conference Tourism
- k. Incentives and Business Tourism
- l. Domestic Tourism etc

If the above-named areas are developed, promoted and marketed, a lot of foreign exchange will be generated, job opportunities created for youth and women, which will eventually lead to sustainable economic growth and contribute in alleviating Poverty amongst the poor and marginalized local communities.

### **PRO-POOR TOURISM POLICY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES AND RELATED MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS STRATEGIES**

The Pro-Poor Tourism Policy Objectives and Strategies of the Ministry is to ensure that the poor reap net benefit from tourism and cultural related development activities and aims to unlock opportunities for poor and marginalized communities. Below are the Ministry's Pro-Poor Tourism Policy Objectives and Strategies: -

- A. To generate revenue foreign exchange and sustainable economic growth at national and community levels; by effectively and efficiently developing and promoting . tourism and cultural activities (Projects) nationwide.
  - (1) Optimize opportunities for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) specially encouraging local and community entrepreneurs.
  - (2) Provide subsidies incentives and credit facilities, as well as educational opportunities for local community entrepreneurs.
  - (3) Create awareness about the importance benefits of tourism and cultural activities amongst the Sierra Leone population nationwide.
  - (4) To create a conducive tourism investment climate for genuine potential investors (especially nationals) in the private sector.
  - (5) Promote domestic tourism amongst all Sierra Leoneans
  - (6) Create sustainable job opportunities and contribute to the well being of rural community residents..
  - (7) Establish linkages and networking between the Ministry

and other sector/departments/industries in order to curb leakages and to stimulate the multiplier effect of the tourism and cultural sector.

- (8) To establish tourism as a national priority.
  - (9) Embark on marketing the tourism and cultural assets nationally and internationally .
- B. Enhance socio-cultural development promotion and marketing; through the active participation of indigenous local people and communities .
- (1) Promote pride in the cultural resources of the country through awareness rising.
  - (2) To empower local communities through their active participation in the preservation, protection, development and marketing of cultural experience and practices.
  - (3) To encourage mutual respect for all cultures and eliminate all forms of discrimination on the basis of language, religion, sex age, wealth, ability etc.
  - (4) Establish cultural groups at chiefdom, district and educational institution levels.
  - (5) Promote inter-ethnic cultural understanding amongst the peoples of sierra Leone in order to forge national unity and peace.
  - (6) Establish handicraft skill training institutions and museums in the country especially in the rural areas.
  - (7) Promote, partnership, co-ordination and co-operation between the Ministry, local and international sectors/institutions/organizations etc for socio cultural development and promotion in Sierra Leone
  - (8) To monitor, minimize or mitigate possible negative impact on the culture of Sierra Leone due to tourism . activities.

C Promote sustainable tourism development through effective and efficient environmental conservation, management and impact assessment.

- (1) Promote sustainable environmental awareness raising and campaign in all tourist destinations or tourism development areas in the country.
- (2) Promote the conservation, preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural assets at national and community levels
- (3) Partner and collaborate with line Ministries, NGO's, local communities etc. in the promotion of sustainable environmental activities.
- (4) To carry out periodic Tourism Environmental Impact assessments (EIA).

D. Promoting Eco-tourism as a tool and catalyst for Poverty Alleviation in Local and Marginalized Communities.

- (1) Identification, assessment and mapping of potential eco-tourism areas for development and promotion.
- (2) Sensitize and create awareness among local community people about the importance (s) and potential benefit of Eco-tourism attraction in their communities.
- (3) Provide local community members with appropriate education and training in Tourism, Planning; Management and control; Environmental Conservation and Preservation.
- (4) Introduce environment conservation and preservation courses in schools around Eco-tourism protected areas.
- (5) Provide incentives and micro-credit facilities to local community entrepreneurs to embark on Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) development.

- (6) Develop and promote protected Eco-tourism area (Parks, wildlife sanctuaries, Cultural Heritage Sites etc.)
- (7) educate local and indigenous communities in the planning, development and management of Eco-tourism projects.
- (8) Interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination areas to tourist (visitors).
- (9) Promote rural and villages tourism; as well as coastal; and inland waterways tourism.
- (10) Develop compensation scheme for local communities where access to protected areas has been curtailed.

E. Strengthen the Ministry's institutional capacity to enhance sustainable tourism development, planning, marketing, management, research, policy formulation and monitoring and evaluation.

- (1) Recruitment and training of senior and junior staff in the Ministry.
- (2) Provision of adequate logistics for the Ministry staff.
- (3) Set up a website and information database with appropriate hard and software, for networking to facilitate easier communication publicity.
- (4) Set up research and documentation room (resource center); equipped with computers; internet facilities, textbooks, journals, articles etc.
- (5) Network staff with other like-minded organizations/sectors/countries nationally, regionally and internationally

F Formulate, review and update all relevant legislative and institutional policies, acts and documents.

- (1) Review and update the 1982 Tourism Development

Master Plan.

- (2) Review and update the 1990 Tourism Development Act.
  - (3) Formulate a defined national Tourism and Cultural Policies and Action Plans.
  - (4) Review Land Tenure policies and nationalized taxation issues where necessary.
  - (5) Introduce regulatory measures to ensure safety and security of tourists in all tourist destinations.
- G HIV/AIDS/ and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) awareness raising.
- (1) Sensitization and awareness raising on the prevention of HIV/Aids and other STIs/STDs in all tourist establishment and destinations.
  - (2) Protection of sexual harassment of children in Tourism.

### **PRIORITY STRATEGIES IN NEED OF URGENT SUPPORT**

1. Provision of adequate logistics (vehicles/motorbikes and Communication equipment) for the Ministry.
2. Formulate a defined National Tourism and Cultural policies
3. Review and update the 1990 Tourism Development Act.
4. Review and update the 1982 Tourism Development Master plan.
5. Provision of the Ministry with adequate and permanent office accommodation.
6. Set up research and documentation room (resource center); equipped with computers, textbooks, journals, furniture and internets facilities.

7. Sensitize and create awareness amongst the populace, especially local communities about the importance benefits of Tourism and Cultural activities
8. Identification, assessment and mapping of potential tourism and cultural potential areas nationwide
9. Provision of adequate and permanent Tourism and Culture Office accommodation in the provincial headquarters of Bo, Makeni and Kenema.
10. Sensitization and awareness raising on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in all Tourist establishment and destinations; and also amongst cultural groups and cultural heritage establishments and destinations.

The above strategies if implemented will enhance the capacity of the Ministry in embarking on Pro-Poor Tourism and Cultural activities nationwide.